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A
STRUGGLE FOR FAME.

A Nobel.

BY
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'THE MYSTERY IN PALACE GARDENS,' 'GEORGE GEITH OF FEN
COURT,' ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.
VOL. III.



LONDON :
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
Publishers in Ordinary to Her Majesty the Queen,
1883.

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A STRUGGLE FOR FAME.

CHAPTER I.

ONE ROAD TO SUCCESS.

‘**H**OW’S Maria?’ had long been played out; ‘less,’ observed Mr. Dawton, ‘from any want of life or animation in the fair Maria herself, than in consequence of a curious and to him (Mr. Dawton) inexplicable lack of enthusiasm on the part of the principal performer.’

‘If I may be allowed the expression,’ proceeded Mr. Dawton, ‘he always acted the part under protest. Give you my honour, sir, he seemed as if he took it only out of compliment to *me*, and during the whole time he had his full share of the profits. Full share, ay, and more.

‘From the first I told you he was a “cad,” father,’ said Ted, which opinion, indeed, the elder son of the house had freely expressed soon after forming the acquaintance of Mr. Bernard Kelly. ‘He only went into the matter with you because he was short of cash. He was deadly ashamed of the whole business, and took the earliest possible opportunity of getting out of it.’

Incredible as this statement sounded to Mr. Dawton, it happened to be perfectly true. For anyone to be ‘ashamed’ of the stage, and despise the ‘noblest profession man ever entered,’ seemed to the poor old actor a theory too wild for acceptance. But Ted had read his man accurately. If he had descended into the pit of Mr. Kelly’s mind, and gone with a light through all the workings of that intricate mine, he could not have arrived at a more correct conclusion than was the case.

Mr. Kelly had loathed ‘How’s Maria?’ and felt each time the name of that mythical female was placarded about the towns in the Home Counties, beyond which distance Mr. Dawton did not think it prudent to travel, as if a date were fixed for his own execution.

‘You see, he never forgets Bernard Kelly,’ explained Ted to his brother; ‘and for this reason, if for no other, he will never, let my father say what he likes, do a bit of good as an actor.’

‘And I’m very sure he won’t as an author,’ capped Will. ‘From the minute I stopped touching up his stories, not an editor would take one of them.’

But Mr. William Dawton proved to be wrong in his idea that the Irishman would fail to make his way as a writer.

He lacked genius, it is true; but he made up for the want of a gift which does not always enable its possessor to compass worldly success, by indomitable perseverance and a determination to try all the gates of fortune till he found one that yielded to his hand. Nothing except that shortness of cash mentioned—a not uncommon want among all sorts and conditions of men—could ever have induced Mr. Kelly to appear in the little play Mr. William Dawton had ‘knocked up’ out of the omnibus incident which introduced Bernard to his uncle; but he was so poor at the time, he agreed to whatever Mr. Dawton proposed; and, as a natural

consequence, found himself carried, much against his own goodwill, to Croydon, Kingston, Hertford, and such-like towns, as well as to places more properly to be regarded as outlying suburbs of London.

Amongst others to Stratford, where, although he saw them not, Miss Bridgetta and her niece saw him.

‘I don’t know what you’ll think about Barney going the round of the country with a parcel of strolling players,’ wrote Miss Cavan to Mrs. Kelly. ‘It seems a great come-down for a man reared in decency—and I am truly sorry for you—respected and respectable as you always were and kept yourself. Me and Hetty paid our shilling apiece, and went into the back seats to get a look at him ; and we felt it was money wasted. It was a pity you could not keep him at home, or get him off to America. Maybe your brother in Derry could give a helping hand to get him out there yet. He’s in the middle of a gang of actors, Mat says ; and, indeed, I think it’s only my duty and a kindness to write and let you know how he’s going on.’

Which was a very weak, foolish letter for

poor Miss Cavan to indite, though she sent it to Callinacoan only with the laudable idea of taking the sting out of whatever Barney might have said about Mat.

Now, Barney had hitherto said nothing to the good people at home on the subject, and might possibly have held his peace for ever, if Miss Bridgetta had refrained her pen. As matters stood, however, he returned a short but incisive epistle to the letter of maternal lamentation which arrived in due course at Bermondsey.

He told his mother not to be fretting about him—that he was doing very well, and meant to do better; that Miss Cavan was an old idiot; that Mat was only a common tout for advertisements; and that if he made five hundred a year, he was drinking six; that it was a pure waste of Irish produce to send hampers to West Ham; and that, if she found she had at any time more than she knew what to do with, she had better send it to him than to a house where there were two slanderous old maids, and a man who had grudged him even the poor shelter their contemptible cottage afforded. Bernard was very angry indeed,

and when he was angry, he knew, as his mother said, 'where to lay on the whip.'

Nevertheless, this little incident confirmed his previous resolution of severing his slight connection with the stage.

'It does not matter,' he considered, 'what a man does or leaves undone, so long as he can *keep it quiet*; but you can't keep things quiet if you give any fool able to pay twelve-pence leave to learn to know all you are about.'

So Mr. Kelly, looking around, saw there was a great field in London open for any man who liked to push his way steadily and unpretentiously.

'It's the horse that steals along wins the race,' he thought; 'that makes no great show, but just creeps on, and on, and was never thought of perhaps at all in the betting. So far as I have seen, it's the talk and the drink spoils a man's chances here.' And he vowed to himself that neither drink nor talk should destroy the chance of Mr. Bernard Kelly.

Brought up as he had been, the amount of money which sifted through the fingers of the people he came in contact with literally appalled

him. Snow in June could not have disappeared quicker than sovereigns did out of the possession of Will and Jim Dawton. No one ever seemed to him to put by a halfpenny. What his friends got they spent, and then they were short till they got more. It was either 'a feast or a famine'—either debt or profusion.

'It is a sort of life that would not suit me,' Mr. Kelly said in after-years, referring to life in Bohemia—but what perhaps he really meant was, it would not have suited him to pay for it. So long as somebody else found what the young Dawtons called 'the shot,' he said nothing in dispraise of Bohemian practices. Nay, most undoubtedly he liked them, always at another person's expense *bien entendu*—the snug supper-parties—the Blackwall dinners—the trips up the river—the picnics—the dances—the play-goings—the luncheons—he took them all just as he took good wine, when he could get that good thing; but they did not turn his head any more than wine. After the pleasantest party he could go home and instantly buckle to his work. So far from unfitting him for his daily labour, society only

seemed to supply some stimulus his nature needed.

‘He never forgot Bernard Kelly,’ to quote Ted Dawton’s words; and for that very reason, the life which might have over-excited and undermined a more sensitive and sympathetic nature really only proved a favouring wind which blew him onward to success.

Ere he had been eighteen months in London the Dawtons felt that though he was among, he was not of them. He had got a literary connection quite outside their own, and a visiting acquaintance into which his literary position never entered. How he had managed this was a question frequently mooted amongst the first friends whose kindness helped him over the difficulties of his earlier metropolitan experience. Mr. Bernard Kelly knew, but he did not mean to enlighten them, parrying all inquisitive inquiries with, to quote Jim Dawton, ‘a wisdom beyond his years.’

The Dawtons could not make the matter out. Mr. Donagh had darkly hinted to them that ‘Kelly was a low fellow,’ ‘born in the ranks;’ that ‘Mr. Balmoy himself came from the dregs of the people.’ ‘Fellows,’ proceeded

Mat loftily, 'my grandfather would not have spoken to, except from the back of his thoroughbred, while they were running bare-foot through the bogs;' and, indeed, when he first arrived in London, there was nothing so particularly refined or aristocratic about Mr. Kelly's appearance, manners, and modes of thought as to induce a belief that he had been what Mr. Donagh called 'cradled amid the purple.' They knew that when Mr. Dawton, senior, first beheld him gazing darkly down into the water in St. James's Park, he was as destitute of friends as of money; and now, behold, he had the *entrée* to good houses; 'and by Jove, sir,' added Will, 'he can plant a book with a publisher almost when and where he likes.'

All of which was true, but the apparent miracle of Bernard Kelly's success had its origin in two extremely simple causes. First, he started in the race unweighted. He had no wife, father, or child to consider; it was not necessary for him to keep up appearances beyond dressing fairly well; he could lodge where he pleased, live as cheaply as he liked; put the width of London between himself and

those who might have intruded upon his time and distracted him from his work ; what he made he could keep, he might save or spend, whichever pleased him best. In the second place, circumstances before he came to London so placed his lot, that he had splendid opportunity for reading books not generally resorted to for purposes of study. As a pigeon wheels round in the air, uncertain apparently at first in what direction to bend its flight—as a dog often first scents three roads out of four where that number meet, ere certainly electing to choose the last—so Mr. Kelly tried his hand at many things before he finally found out what he was best fitted for, and stuck to it.

Almost by accident—at least, if a conversation with Mr. Vassett could be deemed accident—he found he could utilize his almost exhaustive acquaintance with the works of those dramatists the present age has decided to shelve. Bernard Kelly knew them by heart. He read them at a time when he had no thought of coming to London and only the vaguest idea of ever publishing anything had entered his mind, and therefore started with the enormous advantage of not having to go

to the British Museum to 'read up' his subject. When he did enter that building, it was merely to verify a quotation or refer to some work the gist of which was already known to him. At that time he chanced to be earning enough by those London sketches—to which allusion has already been made—to keep his modest pot boiling, and he could therefore write the book he had in his mind at leisure, and afford to spend time in giving it an amount of local colour which delighted Mr. Vassett, himself an antiquarian and a lover of the study of that long-ago time, when gallants ruffled it in doublets and plumed hats, when 'prentice boys fought, when grave citizens had to keep strict watch over fair wives and pretty daughters, when the Fleet afforded splendid opportunities for romance and scoundrelism and comedy and tragedy, when jolly young watermen pulled gay cavaliers to London Bridge, and down the stairs at York Gate—then lapped at high tide by the water, and not lying stranded back in a garden as it does now—ladies with hoops, and fans, and patches, and powdered hair, and looped-up dresses, and high-heeled shoes, were

handed by lords wearing swords at their sides in order to take an airing on the river.

It was concerning the dramatists of this time Mr. Kelly wrote what Mr. Vassett termed 'an important work.' He went into it with love, and he finished it with honour. He knew what he was about; knew the plays the authors he spoke of had written, not merely by name, but line by line and sentence by sentence; he understood their spirit; he saw the tendency of their times reflected in the loose morality of their plots and characters; but beneath the grossness and the levity and the scoffs at decency and dulness and religion, he found a wealth of genius which surprised and delighted the Craven Street publisher.

More than this, he haunted the localities described, the places where these men had lived, made his way into wretched tenements where genius and wit and beauty had once held high court, and weaving into his narrative the very stones of the street, and the aspect of the rooms, and the carving of the mantelpieces, and the paintings on the ceilings, and the pattern of the balustrades, produced a series of

pictures, so said the reviewers, as well as a brilliant and accurate history of the period he described.

The book stamped Mr. Kelly as a man worth cultivating ; but even before it appeared, he had made his way into houses where people are not usually asked merely because they have written a book or flashed some artistic fireworks in the face of the multitude. He achieved this social feat by the kindness of a friend at whose hands he scarcely deserved such consideration.

Not then, but years after, he stated, in what reviewers termed a singularly graceful dedication, that to this lady—for his friend was of the better sex—he owed every good thing he possessed in life. And yet before he left Ireland he served her what a less forgiving and confiding nature might have regarded as a scurvy trick. He had professed to be deeply in love with her ; he had given her to understand that life destitute of her presence would be valueless ; he had been on the very eve of marrying her—indeed, without doubt he would have married her, but that at the eleventh hour her brother, getting wind of

the matter, sent for Barney, as he was called in the easy vernacular of the neighbourhood, and said :

‘Now, look here ! you think my sister has three hundred a year ?’

‘And hasn’t she ?’ asked Barney, ‘simple as a baby,’ to quote his mother’s somewhat incorrect statement.

‘*As long as she remains single !*’ answered Mr. Fortescue, for the gentleman’s name was Fortescue, and the lady was Miss Fortescue—generally referred to among the Kelly connection as the ‘old woman.’

‘How’s that ?’ inquired Barney, naturally anxious to obtain all the information he could on so important a question.

‘Well,’ said Mr. Fortescue in a friendly confidential sort of manner, for at this stage he felt affairs were in his own hand, ‘you see—pray take a glass of wine, Mr. Kelly’—Barney had been ushered into the dining-room after the departure of youth and beauty as personified by Miss Fortescue, and Mr. Fortescue now pushed the decanter over to him. ‘You see, my father made his will when my sister was a young girl. He never altered it ; there were

reasons, as you will allow, why it was wise he never did.'

Mr. Kelly sipped his wine and remained silent ; there were reasons why he did not wish to answer ' Yes,' and he felt he certainly could not answer ' No' till he knew more.

' So,' proceeded Mr. Fortescue, ' to cut a long story short, when my father died and his will was read, we found that everything was left to me except three hundred a year to my sister *so long as she remained single*—the amount to cease totally on her marriage *unless she wedded with my consent.*'

Mr. Kelly finished his wine. He felt matters had reached a climax.

' And, Mr. Kelly,' proceeded Mr. Fortescue—' pray take some more wine,' which Barney did, fearing he might never get anything else out of the Fortescue connection—' to be quite plain, I have no intention of giving my consent to her marrying you ; still, as I have no desire to act unhandsomely towards a person who I think may have been led very much astray in his ideas——'

He paused, but strong in the virtue of silence, Barney declined to compromise himself

with any statement as to whether he had been the deceiver or the deceived.

‘I am willing,’ said Mr. Fortescue, after an almost imperceptible pause, ‘to—to—do something for you. If you like to leave the neighbourhood and—go—anywhere—you can have fifty pounds.’

Fifty pounds and no Miss Fortescue! At that moment, if possessed of fifty pounds in hard cash, all things seemed possible to Mr. Bernard Kelly; so he closed with the offer on the spot.

‘Ye didn’t know your own worth, Barney dear,’ commented his mother, when she heard of the transaction. ‘With your wonderful brown eyes and that soft melting voice of yours, ye might wile a bird off her nest. Ye’d have doubled that fifty if you’d only stuck out a bit. And now where at all d’ye think ye’ll go?’

Mr. Kelly did not know—he thought of America, and of Australia, and of Africa and New Zealand; and then, feeling he lacked the spirit either of a pioneer or adventurer, said, ‘I’ll go to London.’

London was not so far off as Mr. Fortescue

could have desired ; still, in those days it was a long way. A man who wished to return might, were he so inclined, get back almost as easily from America as from London ; and besides, he well knew that after the first cold plunge into the swift stream of metropolitan life had been taken, men did not often desire to return to the turf and the pigs, and the dead-alive existence of a place like Callinacoan.

Mr. Balmoy was communicated with, and expressed his willingness to assist a relative represented as so extremely clever as far as lay in his power ; the outfit was procured, and Barney left what Mr. Donagh would have called his ‘ natal bogs.’

The letter in which he bade farewell to Miss Fortescue was a masterpiece of falsehood and diplomacy ; but what he said, knowing the writer, may be safely left to the imagination of the reader.

The lady, who, though not young, was tender, wept bitterly over the desertion of her devoted swain : he wanted ‘ faith,’ she said sadly—took, indeed, to her bed when her brother told her how he and Kelly had talked the matter over, and decided it was better for

Barney to go to London ; but after a time she tired of tears and solitude—got up, went down stairs, and in pursuance of her domestic avocations discovered the new pad-groom was an extremely handsome young man, and decided that he must be a hero in disguise.

The end of that romance is written in the chronicles of the house of Fortescue.

Wiser than his predecessor, the handsome young man wasted no time over his wooing or his wedding either ; and on this occasion the first hint Mr. Fortescue received of what had been going on, arrived in the form of an intimation that Mr. Robert Underwood had that day wedded Dorothea, only daughter of the late Thomas Fortescue, of Manchester Square, London. If a shell had exploded at Sulby Park it would have caused less confusion.

‘Married—and to a groom!’ gasped Mr. Fortescue. ‘Why, Kelly was nothing to this!’

‘Serve him right,’ thought Mrs. Kelly, ‘turning up his impudent English nose at my Barney.’

‘Something might have been made of Kelly,’ considered Mr. Fortescue, which judgment Barney, as soon as he heard the news, immediately justified by despatching a letter to the bride full of earnest hopes for her happiness, touching expressions of gratitude for her kindness to himself in the days gone by, and assurances that almost every hour he found occasion to recall some of her excellent advice and necessity to use the information she had given him.

It was a sprat thrown to catch a very vague herring, but still Mr. Kelly decided the chance must be worth the postage-stamp and the time which it cost. By return of mail came an answer from Mrs. Underwood. She did not say much about her husband, but she said a great deal concerning Barney—remarked how thankful she felt to know her poor advice had proved of the slightest service; begged him to tell her if she could not be of some real use to him in London; entreated that he would confide all his hopes and fears to her as of old. She had always prophesied he would rise, and rise high, and as a true, though *humble* friend, she desired from the remote

spot where her lot was cast to be able to follow the course of his upward progress.

It is almost unnecessary to say Mr. Bernard Kelly was not at all backward in availing himself of the chance thus offered. He told her he was writing—getting on in the world wonderfully, all things considered; that merely to provide the ‘sinews of war’ he had temporarily joined fortunes with a family named Dawton, well known in the theatrical world, and acted in their company a little play called ‘How’s Maria?’—founded on the incident which had destroyed his hopes of assistance from Mr. Balmoy—at various country towns. Having thus drawn the venom from Miss Donagh’s sting, he went on to say that he had met with many curious persons and passed through many strange vicissitudes since they parted, and that he often wished he was near enough to resume the charming companionship he had been privileged to enjoy at Callinacoan.

‘Then,’ he added, ‘it was you who were wont to amuse and instruct me with stories of a world of which I knew nothing. If we met now, I am vain enough to think, short as has

been my London experience, I could relate many things which would interest you.'

The correspondence prospered ; Mr. Underwood, holding out, got his five hundred pounds and went to America, where popular rumour stated he immediately took to himself another and younger wife. He was quite firm in the matter of not subjecting Mrs. Underwood to the inconveniences of a sea voyage and uncertain prospects when she got on the other side, so the lady returned to her brother's roof—where, as it was clearly impossible she could marry again, a great peace began to reign. The correspondence with Barney supplied all the elements of romance, lacking which, as Miss Fortescue used to say, life lacked everything. 'Existence,' she wrote plaintively, 'is ended for *me*, but in your success I sometimes feel like one raised again from the dead.' She gave him letters of introduction ; she 'worked her friends,' to use a phrase of the Dawtons', for his benefit ; she opened doors for him he never could have opened for himself ; in a word, Mr. Kelly was doing very well indeed, yet he did not feel quite satisfied. He knew now he could make a certain sum per annum

for several years—perhaps for life—but he could only do this by continuous work on the literary treadmill. A thousand miles in a thousand hours seems a vast pedestrian feat to those who are little given to such exercise ; but the life of an author without private fortune, or the fortune of getting into some good thing, just means what is equivalent to walking a mile every working hour of his life. The task is never done—even when he is lying on his death-bed the hack leaves some ‘ copy ’ unfinished. The simile of the crutch and the walking-stick is almost too trite to be repeated here—yet it is so true, use can scarcely render it stale—and Mr. Kelly, who, for all his common-sense and industry and patience and perseverance, was thoroughly Irish in his love of pleasure and hatred of routine, felt sometimes he hated authorship, and wished he could get into another groove where at least some little variety might compensate for inadequate remuneration.

Leader-writing had not at that time got to be the money-making business it has since become, and at all events Mr. Kelly was not on any newspaper. Literary men would

have looked round their fourth-floor chambers in incredulous astonishment had they then been told they need only borrow enough money for the railway fare to some remote borough, in order to write M.P. after their names. The honours conferred by a seat in the House of Commons were not in those days as easy to be obtained as foreign titles and diplomas; there were fewer prizes in authorship than there are now, but as a balance there were not quite so many blanks. The monotony and the drudgery, however, even of an assured success, appalled Mr. Kelly. He felt thankful for what he had been able to do; but he wanted something more—something that would, as he phrased the matter to himself, be going on like rent or interest while a fellow was sleeping. He desired, in brief, a salary—an editorship—anything which would not necessitate the eternal turning out of ‘copy.’ He even fixed the amount of that salary, if he could get it, at precisely the same annual sum as that maiden lady, whose relations were not as kind as she thought they might have been, prayed for. ‘And lest, O Lord! Thou shouldest not know what I mean,

I mean three hundred a year, paid quarterly.' Three hundred a year would have suited Mr. Kelly to a nicety ; but though he was a great deal about London, editorships were things he did not seem to hear about, in time at any rate ; and the Dawtons, who did hear, were not in any hurry to tell him.

Perhaps they thought, and with good reason, that once this 'chief butler' got comfortably placed himself, he would forget all about the struggling Josephs of his former prison-house.

At all events, he was wishing very much for what he did not seem likely soon to get, and was pondering how other people appeared to fall into 'excellent berths,' when one day—the very same day, in fact, when Glen and Ned Beattie sat on the heights above Leigh looking down upon the Thames—he took boat to go to Lambeth. It had dawned upon him it might not have been quite wise on his part to cut the Dawton connection even so far as he had done. True, the Dawtons and the rank to which he wished to belong, and with which he was in fact privileged to associate, were social ingredients so different as to be

well-nigh incompatible. But bankers and clergymen, and old dowagers with assured positions, and prim maiden ladies distantly related to the nobility, put nothing tangible in his pocket ; while the pleasant Bohemians, whose ways and doings and conversation seemed to him so pleasant, but whom latterly he had grown somewhat to look down upon, could tell when and where every new venture on which for a time money would be spent freely was to be started. He could not afford, he decided, to get 'out of the swim;' not at all events till he met with a rich wife to be had for the asking. Mr. Kelly's preferences certainly lay in the direction of a rich wife rather than that of any magazine, new or old ; but spite of his brown eyes and melting voice, no lady with a handsome fortune had, as yet, shown him the slightest favour.

'Faith, there are more after them here even than in Ireland,' thought Mr. Kelly. 'Lords, and baronets, and parsons, and barristers, and judges, and princes too, for aught I know.' Fact is, 'Barney dear' had been much against his will forced to the conclusion that there is no spot on earth where a rich woman, no

matter how old she may be, is not worth more than an impecunious young man.

‘Talk about Miss Fortescue!’ soliloquized Mr. Kelly. ‘Why, she was a mere girl in comparison to some I have seen married to fellows no older than myself. There could not have been more than two or three and twenty years between us; and I am sure that old woman Greeson went to church with last week was seventy if she was a day.’

From all of which it will be seen, Mr. Kelly, spite of the success he had won, was still feeling his way after further fortune. It is impossible for a man to live for nearly three years in a great city and feel the same modest sum he then considered absolute wealth, satisfy his desires. Money in a large town goes literally no way. The bare necessities of existence may certainly be procured at as cheap a rate, if not at a cheaper, than in the country; but Mr. Kelly soon found ‘the minute you set your foot over the doorstep you’ve to put your hand in your pocket.’

A satisfactory income is a point upon which no human being was ever able to come to an exact conclusion. It always means more than

a person possesses. As a rule, wants grow in precise proportion to the means of gratifying them ; and though Mr. Kelly was far too astute and careful to outrun the constable or even spend anything like the whole amount he was making, still he could not avoid casting anxious glances ahead, and wondering if he ever should be rich enough to take a house and keep servants, and ‘live like anybody else.’

He was extremely fond of riding, and when he went into the Park his very soul grew sick with envy at the sight of the splendid animals bestridden for the most part by grooms. At Callinacoan a capital horse could have been bought for about the sixth part of his price in London, while his feed scarcely needed to be reckoned ; and here, once again to quote Mr. Kelly, ‘his keep costs as much as a man’s.’

Musing on these things and many others of a like nature, wondering more particularly if the Dawtons knew any of the staff on a newly started paper which had taken a higher literary position sooner than paper was ever known to have done before in so short a time, Mr. Kelly stepped on board the steamer on the Surrey

side. He had prefaced his intended visit with a present of a two-gallon jar of Bushmills, procured for and sent to him by his uncle at Derry—who wrote, between jest and earnest :

‘I only hope, Barney, you don’t drink all I get for you without help.’

In those days the duty was not equalized, and how his uncle managed to smuggle over so much whisky puzzled his nephew a good deal. As for the young Dawtons, when the present arrived they only laughed and wondered ‘What Kelly wants now?’

‘Don’t let us look a gift-horse in the mouth,’ entreated Mr. Dawton, whose love for good liquor was undiminished, though every day that had gone by since Barney first met him decreased his ability to indulge in it with impunity. ‘Upon the whole, he is not a bad fellow, Kelly. I have known worse—far worse.’

‘So have I,’ said Ted; ‘but I have also known better.’

‘Well, you never tasted finer whisky, at any rate,’ answered his father, who had been testing the quality of the Bushmills by pouring small quantities into a wine-glass, and

taking them off at a gulp as he might medicine.

All unconscious of the criticisms passed on himself and his national beverage, Mr. Kelly, smoking a cigar, left the Surrey-side boat at St. Paul's pier, and walking across the gangway of the Chelsea vessel, made his way forward. As he did so he caught sight of a face which seemed familiar to him, and on which impulse, for it certainly was not at the moment memory, at once induced him to turn his back. Where had he seen that face before? He stood looking down into the water asking himself that question; and then he suddenly remembered he had seen it first in the little covered passage overlooking St. Mary Overy's Dock, and that he had beheld it last as it sank away from sight under a counter in Sise Lane. That was more than two years ago, and his eyes had never rested on it since; but the face was not one to be easily forgotten. Its owner did not look a day older—or very much soberer. He was a man who possessed the doubtful advantage of always appearing to be the worse, or the better—precisely as an observer might choose to consider—for drink. Yes, Mr. Kelly

remembered him perfectly—remembered the light wiry frame without an ounce of superfluous flesh upon it; the hat pushed as far back from the forehead as was compatible with keeping it on at all; the hands plunged deep in the pockets; the nervous, fidgety, excitable manner; the shrewd yet wandering eye; the sharp expression of the countenance; the curiously, muddily pale complexion—that certainly was not an acquaintance he desired to renew, so he kept his back steadily to the passengers, and endeavoured to look with an air of attention and interest at the various wharves, and warehouses, and coal-sheds, and ale-stores, and stranded barges, and black mud, which at that time fringed the Middlesex side of the river, where the Embankment now runs.

‘How d’ye do?’ said a voice at his elbow.

Mr. Kelly turned at the words, and saw his questionable friend smiling up at him in the most affectionate manner possible.

‘I am very well, thank you,’ he answered, with an excellent assumption of surprise, and utter want of recognition.

‘You don’t seem to remember me,’ remarked the other, in a tone of disappointment.

‘Now I look at you more closely, your face does appear familiar,’ observed Mr. Kelly, who saw it was of no use fencing any longer with the difficulty ; but——’

‘You can’t exactly call to mind where last you had the pleasure of seeing it,’ supplied Lance quickly. ‘Now that’s odd. I knew you again in a minute, and I wasn’t quite as sober as you—but I never forget. I am never so far gone that I can’t recollect distinctly next morning what happened overnight. *My memory never gets drunk* ; let me help yours a bit. One confoundedly wet evening in the summer of 1855, three persons—and a good many more—might have been seen sheltering in an alcove at the eastern extremity of Clink Street, Southwark. There, I see you know now where we met, and how tenderly we parted ; good commencement that, by the way, for a novel after the style of “George Prince Regent James, Esq.”’

‘Well, and how have you been getting on since that wet evening in 1855?’ asked Mr. Kelly, with an agreeable affability, making a virtue of necessity now that he found his

assumed want of recollection could serve him no further.

‘Oh! middling; slouching along.’

‘Still sleeping in the queer bedstead where I left you tucking yourself up?’

‘No! had to turn out. The choice was given to me whether I’d walk out or be kicked out, so I elected to walk. I shan’t forget it, to my gentleman. Only let me have the chance, and he’ll wish, perhaps, he had kept a civiller tongue in his head. It was nothing to him—it was not his office—there was no harm that I know of in sitting on the stairs for a few minutes after business hours, considering how soon I’d turn in. Should you say there was?’

‘Well, you see, that depends on a good many things—on the time you had been sitting upon the stairs deciding upon your future movements—the state you were in while you were so sitting—also whether anyone wanted to go upstairs. I confess I think if you had drunk as much as on the night when I escorted you home, your better course would have been to retire at once under the counter; but of course, that is only my opinion.’

‘Look here,’ answered Lance, ‘I like you—

there's a good lot of fun in you, I'll swear—and if it had been you told me to clear off the steps, I shouldn't have taken it so much amiss—but as for that Logan-Lacere, blank him—a proud, stuck-up, *noli me tangere*' (which phrase Mr. Lance gave as '*nolly me tangier*') 'sort of fellow, I wouldn't walk on the same side of the road if I could help it.'

'It is a pity, then, you sat on his stairs.'

'Pity for him, you mean, I suppose—none for me. I was glad we came to high words. I had long been trying to make up my mind to cut myself clear of his precious brother-in-law, but I'd never have done it but for his impudence. However, we won't talk any more about that lot. Where are you bound for?'

'I am going to Chelsea,' answered Mr. Kelly, in whom the instinct of self-preservation was strong.

'I'm bound for Lambeth,' explained the other. 'Old Dawton has not been well, and I thought I'd just go and have a squint at him. He drinks too much—can't stand it—it is a bad habit for anyone to get into.'

Mr. Kelly looked at the speaker in amazement, as he remarked :

‘Well, really, I should scarcely have thought you were the fittest person in the world to throw stones.’

‘Oh! I know what’s what, though I mayn’t always do or care to do the right thing. Besides, there’s a great difference in our ages; a young fellow can drink, when an old fellow gets knocked over. Drink is cumulative, you know, like most poisons.’

‘That is a theory I *never* heard advanced before,’ observed Barney, looking with a certain curiosity at an Englishman younger than himself whose knowledge of the great liquor question seemed even more exhaustive than his own.

‘It is not a theory, it is a fact; and many a man pulls up when he gets to fifty or thereabouts just because he can’t go on.’

‘Is that about the age you intend to turn over a new leaf?’ asked Mr. Kelly, striving vainly to make a hurried calculation as to the amount of sterling coin of the realm his wise friend would have consumed at the expiration of five-and-twenty years or thereabouts.

‘I!’ said Lance. ‘Oh! I shall be dead long before that.’

‘You’ll be what!’ exclaimed Mr. Kelly, amazed—for indeed, the matter-of-fact way in which the words were spoken was enough to astound any one.

‘Dead!’ repeated Mr. Felton, as though he had lightly mentioned the possibility of being bankrupt, or the certainty of succeeding to some good reversion.

‘Why, have you any disease? Do you come of a short-lived family?’ asked Mr. Kelly, for the moment feeling his sympathy aroused and his interest excited.

‘Lord, no,’ answered Lance Felton. ‘My people have a bad habit of living to ninety or a hundred, emulating the example set by Adam, Noah, and the rest of that old-world lot. And I have nothing killing the matter with me that I know of—indeed, I have nothing at all—only I shan’t live, and that’s enough; and I’ve a deal of work to get through first, and I’m just about starting on it.’

‘Going to ask that fair damsel you spoke about two years ago to reconsider her refusal,’ suggested Mr. Kelly, relieved to know his companion’s pessimist views as regarded his

own length of days had no better foundation than a cracked and wandering brain.

‘No, indeed. What the deuce does a man who intends to get on in the world want with a wife? Besides, I am married.’

‘Oh! you are.’

‘Yes, worse luck; not, mind you, that I’ve a word to say against my wife. She is as good a soul as ever drew breath. Managing—contriving—all that. Bless you, there is nothing pleases her better than to consider how she can re-trim an old dress or jacket, and make it look as good as new. But that is a sort of thing I can’t stand; and besides, it’s hard enough work for a fellow to pull himself uphill, without having to drag a wife and child after him.’

‘So I should say, indeed.’

‘I’d bet something you are not married.’

‘No; as I told you, I live with my grandmother.’

‘That you told me two years ago—you might have married a couple or three wives in the time.’

‘I might, but I have not; the same arrangement still continues,’ said Mr. Kelly; who

afterwards, thinking the conversation over, could not imagine what made him tell so many falsehoods to his companion.

If he had exhausted the matter, he would have found it was because he was afraid of speaking the truth.

‘Your grandmother can’t be a chicken now,’ remarked Mr. Felton.

‘She is eighty-three,’ answered Barney, on the principle of ‘in for a penny, in for a pound.’

‘And warm, doubtless.’

‘She has enough to live on.’

‘Which will come to you, I dare say?’

‘That depends on how I behave myself, and other things.’

‘And what are you doing till the dear old lady retires to the family vault?’

‘Eating my dinners,’ said Mr. Kelly mendaciously.

‘What! Are you a barrister?’

‘Something of the sort.’

‘Well, I’m——’

‘What did you think I was, then?’

‘I don’t know. I was divided between something in the brewery line, and Guy’s.

Butterby thought you travelled for lead pencils.'

'Evidently I carry letters of credit in my face,' said Mr. Kelly bitterly.

'Don't be huffed, old fellow,' entreated Mr. Felton. 'We don't pretend to be judges—we can't be. We know a swell when we see him—and we can tell a potboy; but we've a lot to learn as regards the intermediate stages.'

'Lambeth,' said Mr. Kelly with a great sense of relief, echoing the word which rang out from the gangway. 'This is your pier, I think, is it not?'

'Yes, I shall get out here. 'Won't you come along too? I can take anybody I like to Dawtons', and there's always something going. They'll be delighted to see any friend of mine. Say yes—like a good fellow, do!'

'Couldn't possibly, thank you,' answered Mr. Kelly with the gravest composure—'mustn't throw my people at Chelsea over for anybody.'

'Good-bye, then, till our next merry meeting.' And after a shake of the hand which made every bone in Barney's fingers tingle, Mr. Felton betook himself amidships and leapt

ashore, scorning the aid of the gangway, and exchanging as he passed light pleasantries with the piermen and the takers of the tickets.

So extremely anxious did Mr. Bernard Kelly feel to defer the date of that next merry meeting indicated by his festive friend that on stepping ashore at Millbank Pier, which he did, he immediately took 'bus for the City, where, going to a modest tavern in the very heart of Stock Exchange land, he ordered a chop and modest potation of bitter, after which he betook himself by means of that cheerful Thames Tunnel Route which will never more be explored by any adventurous pedestrian, back to his lodgings in Bermondsey, where he at once penned an extremely neat and telling little paper, entitled 'Undesirable Acquaintances,' for which he received the sum of two guineas.





CHAPTER II.

THE NEW STORY.

IN those lonely wolds where since her father's death Glenarva Westley spent a good deal of time, an idea had taken root in her mind which shortly after she was married began to grow rapidly. She had wandered over the sparsely inhabited country, which for all signs of life and activity it presented might have been thousands of miles from London, till its desolation entered into her spirit, became a part and parcel of her very soul. There was one especially solitary farmhouse lying in a hollow surrounded by some elder-bushes and ash-trees which Glen never wearied of contemplating. From a little knoll on the side

of the low hill beneath which this house nestled she could see the almost empty farm-yard, the horsepond shaded by a great weeping willow, the neglected orchard, the plot of ground that had once been a garden, but was now a mere mass of tangled weeds; the house with its small windows and steep red-tiled roof, the walnut-tree shading the front door, and the tiny stream which ran so slowly it scarcely seemed to flow at all.

In this spot dwelt a mother and son. She was a widow. The son was reported to be studious, or in the words of the neighbourhood, 'over-fond of his book;' he was a tall, earnest-looking fellow, with deep-set eyes and overhanging brows; a stern mouth which could, Glen knew, relax into a beautiful smile; a sad expression of countenance, and the voice of a man who thought many times before he spoke once. The mother was a small, thin woman, who had apparently seen better days. The aspect of the farm itself was starved, and people said it was a shame to serve good land as that was served, and that young Blandford either ought to put his shoulder to the wheel,

or give up the place, and let somebody take it who could get something out of the ground.

‘Ashtrees,’ which was the name of the farm, lay in another parish to that of which Glen’s friend was rector. So the widow and her son did not attend the church which boasted the beautiful painted window, and there was no further acquaintance between the parsonage and the lonely house in the hollow than a mere greeting in passing, or the exchange of a few words, if the dwellers chanced to meet at the railway-station, or in the High Street of the nearest town.

It was, perhaps, because she knew so very little of the pair that Glen’s fancy never wearied in imagining what their inner life must be. She pictured to herself the long winter nights in the quaint old house; the glorious summer days, when the fruit ripened in the orchard almost unheeded, and a few flowers struggled into bloom beside the moss-covered walks in the weed-grown garden—she thought of the mother not perhaps understanding her son, and wishing him more practical and commonplace—the son struggling with a sense of undeveloped genius and

sickening of the monotonous life—the dreary round of common duties—eager to leave the place, and yet tied to it by tender memories, and by the affection he bore the woman who loved him more than all the world.

Possibly Glen was quite wrong in all her ideas concerning both Mrs. Blandford and her son; but if she were she never knew the fact, and long before the story of which the seed was sown one stormy day in early spring, had grown to its full stature, the *personnel* of mother and son had utterly changed in her mind. She imagined a youth looking at the painted window Sunday after Sunday, till it became a part and parcel of his nature. She thought of him wandering over the bare, unbeautiful country dreaming of sculpture and painting—living mentally with the monks of old, and returning ever unwillingly to the constant routine, to the common drudgery of his daily life.

So far she had got when she married, but no further—and as two of her books were then about to appear almost immediately, both under assumed names, the idea seemed to drift away and become lost amongst the

practical matters with which she was at the time occupied. Since her father's death she had written a new novel, which Mr. Vassett published almost before the ink was dry, and sold another to one of the great West End houses; this latter work, indeed, being no other than the manuscript she formerly besought Mr. Lacere to take out of the hands of the firm that had bought it. When she told him of this proceeding he smiled quietly, but he spoke no word of comment on her inconsistency. 'I told you so,' or 'I am not surprised,' or 'I thought you would do it,' were words she never heard from his lips.

'If Lady Emily were to know I had written every line of the book, I should not care now,' she said, in feeble explanation. 'I only wish I had taken the same view of matters two years ago that I do now, and I might have been doing well by this time.' The fact being that Glen by sheer force of audacity had got fifty pounds for a novel which would have been dear at five. She wanted money so badly and she was so determined to have it, that she extracted an acceptance of the work and cheque in payment from a publisher

who otherwise might have coquetted with the matter for a long time, and then ‘declined the story with thanks.’ Till the last day of her life Glenarva will always remember two cheques she received; and that fifty pounds was one of them.

‘I had not the least idea I should get it,’ she added—‘in fact, till I went to the bank and received the notes over the counter I did not believe the transaction real.’ Later on she had another cheque and another transaction she did not at the time believe real either. History repeats itself, even in the lives of human beings.

And now she was married—the mistress of a house—the wife of a man who thought she was without spot or blemish; who did not want her to write; who knew perhaps it would be better for her and happier for him if she never wrote another line; who really had not the faintest idea of the power she possessed; who said to her:

‘Remember, dear, that I never wish you to think of publishing except for your own pleasure. Do not trouble yourself now about money or money-making; leave all that to

me'—an injunction it is only fair to add Glen obeyed most literally for a time. Her life had been hard and anxious ever since she came to London—she had done a great deal of work; the trouble of her father's death was as yet scarcely dulled. Her bodily health was not good—her mind was weary—her energy seemed to have departed; and it is just possible if she had not happened about this time to make the acquaintance of a man who saw more clearly than anyone had yet done what was in the girl, she might have laid aside her pen and never written the book which made her name. As for her new friend, he treated her fancies and prejudices with even less ceremony than Ned Beattie. He laughed at her whims and tempers, at her 'tall' writing, at her little displays of knowledge, was severe on her sins of omission and commission, but still said, 'I know I am not mistaken; you have a great gift, but you must learn to use it properly.' He reviewed her books, or got them reviewed, in a manner which made Glen sometimes feel that she wished she had never written a line. She was lashed, she was ridiculed, she was accused of plagiarism, but

then there came some word of praise which atoned for all that had gone before. Upon the whole, she wondered at the amount of commendation bestowed. Already she was beginning to show one sign of improvement; she now understood how extremely bad her best efforts really were. Her grandest passages no longer filled her with delight; faintly the beauty of simplicity was dawning upon her. She could at last see serious faults in her books, and certainly the quality of modesty appeared in her estimate of them.

‘If I cannot do any better work than I have done,’ she considered, ‘I may as well cease writing altogether.’ Not a happy mood for an author, perhaps; but a most fortunate one for the reader! Meantime the reviews had actually stimulated Mr. Vassett’s appreciation to such an extent, that he sent to know if Mrs. Lacere felt disposed to enter into an engagement to let him have another book.

Glen said ‘Yes;’ but she failed to add when he might expect to receive the manuscript. She thought she had no plot on which to found a story. Vaguely the lonely wolds, the solitary farmhouse, kept recurring to her memory;

but she did not see her way to raise any superstructure upon such meagre foundations, till one evening, when her husband and a friend of his were talking about the rich deep permanent colours to be seen in old church windows, which modern art sought in vain to reproduce, she looked across the table to her husband, and said: 'I shall write a novel about stained glass.'

They all laughed at the idea. 'Not a very likely subject,' remarked the visitor; while Mr. Logan-Lacere's brother-in-law smiled the quiet, tolerant smile Glenarva had long learnt to detest.

'We shall see,' answered Mrs. Lacere determinedly, and though she did not, like Charlotte, 'go on cutting more bread and butter,' she proceeded to pour out more tea, while the talk she had interrupted flowed back into its former channel, and Glen took refuge in silence—an asylum she latterly somewhat affected.

Day by day the story grew in her mind. She never perhaps afterwards wrote a book which through so many months was such a companion. Busy with various other matters,

she could not write much at a time, and, as a consequence perhaps, what she did write, read very close. No human being who glanced at a work the reviewers criticized not only mercifully but most favourably, imagined the clear, nervous sentences born of sorrow, experience, love, disappointment, were penned by the same author who had given to the world a novel it did not in the least want, called 'Tyrrel's Son.'

It was a curious book to take the fancy of the public. Often during its progress, Mr. Vassett, after reading some of the chapters which set utterly at naught all established precedents, all foregone traditions, felt it his duty to write and remonstrate with the author on the failure she was about to achieve for herself, and the loss such a novel must ensure to him.

Actually he read the manuscript as it proceeded—Glen gave him abundant leisure for doing so—and differences of opinion were of such constant occurrence between the two, that at length the publisher, resigning himself to making the best of a bad business, determined to print as small an edition as possible,

and decided, if ever he accepted another book from Mrs. Lacere, to stipulate the whole of it should be placed in his hands before any definite arrangement was arrived at.

The book experienced many difficulties ere it was bound. In the first place, Glen did not find it easy to write, and she kept it 'dawdling about,' as Mr. Pierson said, for eighteen months; in the second, Mr. Vassett insisted on one chapter being expunged altogether. Mrs. Lacere naturally objected to Mr. Vassett's dictum. The incident described, she insisted, happened to be absolutely necessary to the plot, and she could not expunge it. Mr. Vassett thereupon said he would prefer not publishing the book. He had already paid for it, and he therefore must have been very much in earnest. Glen felt this, though not so acutely as she might have done subsequently; and after a long and friendly interview, a compromise was effected. Mrs. Lacere, whom Mr. Vasset declared to be '*for a woman and an author* most reasonable,' agreed to find some other road by which the desired end could be reached; while the publisher, on his side, stated that though he thought the whole book

a complete mistake, he would do his best with it.

The 'mistake' was finished—the book was complete—the 'hand that had written it laid it aside;' and Glen for a time went lonely and desolate about the duties of her daily life.

The people she described had grown to be heart of her heart; they had walked with her in hope, and joy, and sorrow; their interests had been hers—their fears hers. She had turned to them for companionship when she felt sad and low-spirited—their troubles had beguiled her from the contemplation of her own. And now they were dead and gone—they could never walk the City streets with her again—she should never cross the Essex wolds in the wild March weather, or February sleet, or summer's sunshine with them any more—she should not see them sitting in church or listen to their sobs or behold their smiles ever, ever in the future. The manuscript was 'set up'—the tale told—'the end' printed on the final page. The world would read—the reviewers blame, perhaps—some readers scoff—a few, a very few possibly, un-

derstand ; but they, the men and the women who had been more real to her than the men and women she came in bodily contact with, were gone—never to return—never any more, for ever !

Then came a lull. The book was advertised, subscribed. The subscription was fairly good—quite as good as Mr. Vassett expected ; for he still anticipated loss.

‘ Ah ! ’ he said to Mr. Pierson, ‘ if she had only taken my advice and followed beaten paths, something might now have been done with a book of hers.’

‘ Why did you not advise her to try strange roads ? ’ suggested Mr. Pierson ; ‘ then she might have gone the way you wished—women and pigs, you know.’

‘ True,’ answered Mr. Vassett, ‘ if scarcely polite. It is too late, however,’ he added.

‘ I have a notion myself the novel will go,’ said Mr. Pierson. ‘ Somebody must sometimes strike out a new line.’

Mr. Vassett smiled a smile which meant Glen had much better have abided by the wisdom of her elders.

‘ I think there is stuff in the book,’ repeated

Mr. Pierson doggedly, varying his words but not his meaning.

‘I think there might have been,’ amended Mr. Vassett.

‘It strikes me, you know, people must tire occasionally of the love and twaddle business.’

‘Not so long as love and twaddle form the principal business and conversation of so many persons’ lives.’

‘But do they? Candidly now, doesn’t there come a time when a man gets tired of all that sort of thing?’

‘Not till he has done with everything, I imagine,’ answered Mr. Vassett, under all whose hope of profit, and dread of loss, and caution and worldly prudence, and desire to make money, and wish to stand A 1 as a publisher, and delight in the old streets, and interest in the houses where noted men had lived, a little sweet, sad, tender romantic strain was ever wailing, which bore for its burden some words about a time of roses and a day of pain, of some never-to-be-forgotten love-passages in the fair, fresh springtime of existence, and hours and hours of agony ere its

autumn, when all things worth having or thinking about in life were hid away for ever, so far as this world is concerned, in Shepperton Churchyard, hard by which the Thames flows calmly, past dipping willow and fairy ait, mansion and church and hamlet, beside green pastures, bordered by reeds and rushes, decked with water-lilies, onward to the great unknown city, and beyond it to the unseen mysterious sea.

And in truth at that time Glen had done a very daring thing—taken a very doubtful course in making love merely occupy the same position in her story that it does apparently in the lives of most of those with whom we come in contact.

It was an innovation sure to be unpopular with her own sex, who are, after all, the public for whom a novelist has to cater. Ladies and boys were then the audience to whom all authors, who wished either for ‘praise or pudding,’ or both, felt it wise to appeal. Times in that respect are not much changed ; even to this present day the novelist who rings but the changes of one eternal song—the loves of lovely woman—the beauty of

lovely woman—the unselfishness of lovely woman—the dress of lovely woman—the lovers of lovely woman—will be the most popular. Where, for example, George Eliot counted her thousands, the *Family Herald* counts its tens of thousands !

Thus Mr. Vassett was, in one sense, quite right when he accounted Glen's book a mistake ; but the greed for gain or applause was not on her when she began her task, and she finished it, not for the sake of writing, but because she had something to say, and could know no real rest till it was said.

As has been stated, the desolation of the part of Essex where she had been staying entered into her very soul, and the vision she conjured up was that of a young man looking Sunday after Sunday on the painted window, which was at once so sad, so solemn, and so beautiful, till an overmastering ambition seized him to discover the secret of colour, which seemed to have died out with the monks of old. Though not an artist, he was possessed of keen artistic tastes, and the walls of that wainscoted parlour in the farmhouse which he owned were decorated with weird drawings

faithfully representing the wild, lonely country amid which he lived, as seen under summer's suns and winter's snows—fast bound with frost, and smiling when the golden grain was cut and gathered into bundles, ready for carrying under the glorious autumn skies. And amid and through all these landscapes one fair form constantly reappeared—now standing beside a stream—now mingling with the reapers—now tossing the newly-mown grass—again tripping across the lea—and anon, ‘through buds and branches peeping.’

She was his love, his life, his inspiration; for her he told himself he desired wealth and fame—for her sake he desired to emulate the blues, and the yellows, and the greens, and the reds, which, all exquisitely softened and blended together, made up the perfect whole of that picture, even to see which, told the soul a little of the lesson our Saviour came to teach.

She was fair, young, merry. All the gloom of that gloomy house had failed to cast one shadow over her. She loved everything about the farm—the pigeons, the cats, the horses, the grim old grumbling bailiff, every tile on its roof, every single brick in its walls; but

for the sake of the man she loved beyond all men, she was willing—more than willing—to leave the pleasantness of the only home she had ever known, and go away with him to London, where he felt certain he should be able to reduce many theories to practice, and find the colours modern humanity had so long wished for, and wished in vain.

It is not necessary to tell how the story ended—how the author worked it out is all which concerns this tale. Painfully, surely, slowly, she gathered all her parts together, wove into the narrative the trials, the sorrows, the self-denials, the successes of trade—explained processes of manufacture unknown utterly to the reading public—took the outside world due east in London, and asked it to walk into dreadful little manufactories, and listen to ‘shop’ talk, and take an interest in the doings and sayings of men who had probably never been to a dinner-party in their lives, and knew nothing of Sir Bernard Burke, and were not acquainted with lords or baronets; but who were yet some of them gentlemen and some of them cads, following the nature of their kind.

A book certain never to be popular amongst the many, that goes without saying ; a book, nevertheless, which was talked about, and made a mark.

‘ Who is the author ? ’ everyone asked, and many people answered, ‘ Oh ! I know him very well indeed ; ’ and then *he* was drawn respectively as a barrister, a gambler, a man who had neglected his wife, a man whose wife had run away from him, a man who was about town, a man who had been about town, but who now represented her Majesty as consul somewhere at the world’s end ; and, lastly, he was represented to Glen’s husband, by a chatty individual who professed to know everyone, as ‘ a devilish good fellow, sir—and clever too ! ’

It may have been about this time some doubts entered Mr. Lacere’s mind as to *what* he had married, while for eighteen months a dreadful question had been agitating Glen :

‘ There must be some mistake,’ she thought. ‘ It is not Mordaunt Logan-Lacere I have taken for better or worse, but *the whole family*, and I am a nobody in it.’

Which was all quite true ; she and Mor-

daunt Logan-Lacere were now one, and as he certainly had ever been a mere cipher among his relations, it followed as a matter of course that the woman who was supposed to be in subjection to him counted as nothing. From the first good care was taken to teach Glen her proper position, and since she promised to be a somewhat difficult subject, Mr. Lacere, the cousin-brother-in-law, adopted the admirable course of ignoring her. He had always led Mr. Logan-Lacere by the nose, and he did not mean any wife on earth to weaken his influence in that quarter.

Almost unconsciously he had read that Glen was not to be humbugged, but he felt, with her hot, impulsive temper, she might be driven off the field; and finding, much to his dissatisfaction, that, spite of many delays, the marriage really was a fact accomplished, the moment Glenarva Westley became Mrs. Lacere, he commenced his tactics. They were beautifully simple. It was easy to make a girl whose life had been spent amongst loving and frank friends feel she was not wanted in a family sufficient to themselves; and Glen did feel this bitterly. If he wished

to tell her husband it was a fine day, for example, he made the communication either with closed doors, or at the other end of the room in a subdued and confidential voice; and finding that this treatment only roused Mrs. Logan-Lacere's ire against himself, he began in conversation with her dexterously to exalt his own abilities and good qualities, and try to make her think the man she had married was, after all, a poor sort of creature. But Glen's eyes had long been open to this little failing on the part of her new male relative. She was well aware that not only to herself, but to others, Mr. Lacere was in the habit of glorifying himself and depreciating Logan-Lacere. She tried to make her husband understand this, but he resolutely declined to attach the slightest importance to her representations; and Glen, after madly beating her spirit and bruising her heart, and shedding passionate tears of sorrow and anger, battling against the cruelty of circumstances she found herself powerless to alter, suddenly abandoned the hopeless contest.

'If he likes his brother-in-law better than he does me, let him,' she thought, in an access

of bitter loneliness. 'I have no father or mother to talk to—I have no home to go to, or I would go. I must bear it just as I can.'

Possibly 'it' was one of the very worst experiences which could have come to such a temperament.

Shortness of money she did not care for—she had served a long apprenticeship to that; but to live amongst people who were reserved, with whom she knew now she never could have any sympathy, who stood perpetually between her husband and herself, who were a burden to him pecuniarily and a drawback socially, were matters Glen felt something too hard to bear; and yet, so great was her antagonism to this opponent, that she firmly made up her mind he should never crush her.

Perhaps he knew something of all this. If he did not, it was certainly from no reticence on the part of Glenarva. Fierce passages of arms had occurred between them, in which both sides went so far they found it expedient at length to withdraw their forces by tacit consent. It was a miserable experience, one bad for soul and body, which left ineradicable

traces on Glen's face and mind. For ever the calm, peaceful look of youth left her brow, and though her character strengthened, there grew at the same time a mental irritability as well as a weary unrest, foreign to her original nature. To anyone who had known her at Ballyshane, the change would have seemed most marked ; indeed, when, after the lapse of two long years, Edward Beattie saw his old friend again, he asked himself in astonishment if this grave, cynical, self-contained woman could ever have been light-hearted, frank-spoken Glen Westley.

For a time he watched her in silence—he was staying at Mr. Lacere's—but the third day after his arrival he asked :

‘What has altered you so much ? You are not in the least like the Glen you used to be.’

‘Getting old,’ answered Mrs. Logan-Lacere laconically.

It was noticeable she did not deny the truth of his remark, or fence with it.

‘It is not that,’ he said. ‘What is it, dear?’ he went on ; ‘won’t you tell *me* ? Glen,’ he said, as she shook her head, ‘you

must tell me—me, your brother Ned—the Ned of the old days when we didn't think much, either of us, of death, or trouble, or sickness, or anything but amusement. Aren't you happy ?

'*Most unhappy,*' she answered slowly. The words seemed wrung from the very depths of some dark despair, and then she turned aside to hide the tears now coursing down her cheeks.

For a minute Edward Beattie looked at her in utter amazement ; then he said, 'Glen, you must be mad : why in the world should you be unhappy, married to a man you love—and who simply adores you ?'

'He doesn't do anything of the kind,' she answered, with the manner which was new to her.

Ned laughed, relieved. 'Oh ; that's it, is it ! and Mrs. Glen, for all her strength of mind, finds she is not superior to the little feminine complaint of jealousy ! *Who is she ?*'

Glen flashed round upon him indignantly.

'It isn't a "she" at all, and I am not jealous.'

'That you are, my dear,' he retorted ; 'and

now you have taken a notion of that sort it can't be easy lines for your husband. I always was afraid he would let you get your head. Fact is, Glen, you are too well off. As the mothers say to their children in Ireland, you want something to cry for. You have married a man who thinks you perfection ; who worships the ground you walk on ; who if you expressed a wish to have the top brick of the chimney, would at once send for a ladder to humour your fancy.'

Glen did not answer. Perhaps in her heart she knew every word Ned spoke to be true. But there was something he did not know—something he wanted to find out.

'Yes, it must be hard for your husband,' he went on provokingly ; 'but it serves him right for marrying a clever woman, or rather, a woman who is considered clever. When I choose a wife I'll take very good care that if she can read she can't write.'

'Perhaps you may find something at the Asylum for Idiots to suit you,' remarked Glen.

'I think I should like a mute best,' said Mr. Edward Beattie. 'By the way, Glen,

what induced you to favour the world with that last book? you had much better never have published it. I wonder Lacere allowed you. If you had been my wife I would have made you burn it.'

'What is your particular objection to a work which has not been wholly unsuccessful?' asked Mrs. Lacere, with a fine scorn.

'My objection is general as well as particular. It is a morbid, unhealthy book.'

'If you think of any other bad quality the novel possesses, pray do not forget to mention it.'

'Supposing you found you were unable to exist without writing something,' persisted Ned, 'why did you not give us a story calculated to make us all happier and brighter and better—a womanly sort of tale about flowers and children and happy lovers?'

She made no answer; the old pain was tugging at her heart-strings. She could have told him the sweet folly, the hopes and fears, the dreams, the pangs, the trembling doubts of happy lovers had never been for her—might never be for her while the sun rose and set. She understood now what a loss had been hers.

Her past lacked one great good, for which no future, however fortunate, could ever atone. Out of her very capability for wretchedness she was beginning to estimate what her capability for happiness might have been. Was the life she had once thought would prove so beautiful, so prosperous, so complete, to be after all but one long series of disasters and disappointments? She had longed for success, and when it came it was with death close following on its heels; her wounded heart craved for an absorbing love, but when it had lavished its full store of warm, passionate affection, found for return it was but one love amongst many. That a man should leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife was an article of faith which found small favour in the Lacere connection. One of the very few funny things which Miss Lacere ever said, quite unconsciously—for like most persons of the same grim category she was utterly destitute of all sense of humour—chanced to be that we were only told two things about heaven, namely: There was a great deal of love, and *no marriage!*

‘A sort of heavenly Agapemone,’ observed

Glen sarcastically. But that flippant remark did not exactly contain the gist of Miss Lacere's meaning—it was a brotherly and sisterly love she dreamed of, in which the mad craze for a wife should have no place !

‘ Wives always cause disunion in families,’ said another of Mr. Logan-Lacere's female relations, from which statement alone, the pleasant and unselfish spirit animating his belongings may be conjectured.

And finally, to put the case in a nutshell, Glen being a woman who had never before in the whole of her short life known what it might be like not to stand first in the love of those by whom she was surrounded—found herself married to a man who conceived it to be his duty as well as his pleasure to let his relations feel wedlock had not made any difference in his sentiments towards them ; who refused utterly to hear with Glen's ears—see with Glen's eyes—to notice with Glen's perceptions—to judge with Glen's sense ; who let himself be made a mere shuttlecock, for all these battledores to play with ; who, although, as Ned would have said with that terrible candour of his, fifty times cleverer than his

wife, she knew never had, and never could compass any worldly good for himself, burdened as he was with the opinions, prejudices, and traditions of these terrible Old Men of the Sea.

All these things and fifty more passed through Glen's mind as Ned finished his agreeable sentence, and leaning her head against the lattice-work of the arbour in which they sat, she answered him never a word ; then she rose, and would have gone away quietly without letting him guess the anguish she felt, had not one uncontrollable sob broken the spell.

'Glen, sit down,' he said, almost sternly ; and after she obeyed there ensued a silence rent by no sound save that of bitter weeping.

At last Ned spoke. 'Look here, Glen,' he began, 'whatever your trouble may be, crying won't mend it. In most lives, I suppose, there is something not quite right ; but I am very sure we don't improve our lot by moaning over it. So far as I can see, you ought to be a very happy woman ; but if you are not, if you have any real sorrow, don't let it conquer you. If my poor father could speak to you now, he

would say, "Glen, take my advice and go and weed in the garden for a couple of hours every morning; or find out some one who has a mangle, and ask them to let you turn it; do anything rather than sit idle nursing a real or imaginary grievance." Now,' finished Mr. Edward Beattie on his own account, 'put on your bonnet, and come out for a walk.'

It was good, honest, wholesome advice; but he did not know the depressing nature of the influences by which Glen was surrounded. She saw the evil, but she could not alter it; she felt, at last, she could not try to alter it; her health was bad; she had got into a low state of mind; she saw everything through darkened spectacles. Saying no further word to her about the change wrought since her father's death, Ned, keeping his eyes wide open, soon arrived at a pretty accurate idea of the state of affairs.

It was towards the close of his visit he one evening over tea exploded a shell in the midst of the whole Lacere connection.

'Why don't you persuade your husband, Glen, to leave England?' he said. 'I am not particular where I go. Suppose we all start

together for Canada. Plenty of shooting, fishing, boating. It would set you both up in health; and I am sure clear blue skies would be an agreeable change after the smoke of London. What do you say, Mr. Lacere? Will you consider my proposition?

To describe the faces of the ladies of the Lacere family as Mr. Beattie rattled out these words would be simply impossible.

‘Oh! we could not part with either of them,’ declared Miss Lacere, as spokeswoman, and a murmur of assent followed from the others.

‘The best friends must part sometimes,’ answered Ned carelessly; and so the talk went on till a very pretty spirit of hatred and antagonism was established between Glen, Glen’s friend, and Glen’s relatives.

Possibly it was during Mr. Beattie’s visit the idea first dawned upon Mr. Logan-Lacere that his female relations were not quite perfect.

He was too loyal to admit even to himself they were prejudiced, yet he could not but feel it was a pity they had, for some reason best known to themselves, conceived such a

prejudice against everything Irish—‘dear’ Glen of course excepted.

Mr. Edward Beattie had a store of capital stories, which he told remarkably well, but the Misses Lacere could ‘see nothing in them.’ Mr. Edward Beattie had braced up his old comrade Mrs. Lacere, and benefited her mentally, morally, and physically; nevertheless the Lacere connection heard with pursed-up mouths and silent tongues their ‘darling Mor-daunt’s’ encomiums on his wife’s friend.

‘It is all very well,’ said Miss Humphries, in the privacy of that awful and secret family inquisition which was for ever sitting upon Glen, Glen’s ways and waywardness, Glen’s antecedents, Glen’s former friends, and Glen’s present misguided and led-by-the-nose husband—‘but ah!——’

Whereupon ‘ah!’ was echoed by the whole family with the solemnity of a curse.

Mr. Logan-Lacere, however, always retained a pleasant memory of the cheery young fellow, and said most truly he felt very sorry he could not stay longer with them.

‘You have done my wife a great deal of good,’ he said.

‘You ought both to start with me for New Zealand, or Australia, or Canada,’ answered Ned ; while to Glen he spoke with grave conviction :

‘Your husband will never do a day’s good while he stays among his own people. Get him away from them ; they would sink a man-of-war. And as for you, my dear, spite of all the loves, and darlings, and flattery, and all the rest of it, they only care for what they think they can coax out of you.’

Certainly no one could accuse Mr. Edward Beattie of unduly flattering anybody.





CHAPTER III.

BARNEY'S LUCK.

TIME went on, and Mr. Bernard Kelly was doing remarkably well indeed. He chanced to be the sort of man success makes, but does not mar. With only half-a-crown between himself and nothing, he might have felt inclined to play a reckless game, but possessed of a sovereign, he turned the coin over and over, and decided it was too valuable to risk losing in any mad or careless fashion. He worked hard—he lived frugally—he adventured carefully; his barque carried no passenger save himself, and bore no freight save his own fortunes. Why should he not have got on? Why should a man who regards himself alone, fail to succeed? Fame

to Bernard Kelly meant so much hard cash. The reputation of a Shakespeare or a Milton would in his eyes have seemed valueless, unless it had brought for dowry a good house, a possible carriage and pair, and the certainty of never again being short of a ten-pound note.

He had advanced considerably in his ideas since he stood drearily contemplating the swans in St. James's Park. No human being ever exactly knew how he had managed to do so remarkably well, and it is quite possible he could not have told himself. The *Galaxy* was dead and buried. Its short and brilliant life may have been a merry one to the contributors, but the proprietors groaned in spirit when they reckoned up the amount they had to pay for its peculiarly unprosperous career.

There is always, however—so says the old proverb—one door open when another is shut; and wherever Mr. Kelly found a door open he had a knack of walking in, and having obtained a footing, keeping it. Formerly, as has already been mentioned, he was asked to submit some manuscripts to the editor of the opposition magazine, on which occasion he received that

figurative slap in the face which caused him very seriously to consider the demerits of his own productions. Months went by, and again he received a polite note, this time begging to know if he was disposed to contribute some short papers to the journal in question. Mr. Kelly had, long before this epistle reached him, ceased to be a novice in literary matters; so, without writing, he called to see the editor, who turned out to be the inquisitive gentleman he travelled with up to London when he first came to seek his fortune in the great metropolis.

The recognition was not mutual. Bernard knew him again in a moment, but the confident, well-dressed, easy-spoken author, who talked so glibly about manuscripts, and journals, and publishers, and men on the press, and all the rest of it, bore small resemblance to that *gauche*, half-civilized Barney who had vexed the pharisaical soul of righteous Mat Donagh and disturbed the whole economy of Abbey Cottage.

The former sub-editor was gone. When Mr. Kelly explained how his previous stories had been treated with contumely, the chief

expressed his extreme regret, and trusted 'the unhappy accident, which must have arisen through some gross misapprehension, would not deprive their magazine of services he felt only too anxious to secure.' Barney permitted himself to be appeased; he was willing, he said, to 'contribute,' but he must decline to 'submit.' The editor declared he never should have thought of asking him to do anything of the sort, and begged to know his terms.

It was all very well and all very nice, and Mr. Kelly thought he had really no reason to complain; nevertheless, he could not blind himself to the utterly precarious nature of a literary profession. Manuscript did not grow while a man slept; it failed to put fat on his ribs unless the author was always at work. Though he had proved himself capable of hard and prolonged labour, it would be folly to say that to an Irishman the prospect of grinding out 'copy' during the term of his natural life seemed agreeable. He wanted an appointment of some sort—an editorship, if nothing better offered—and at last he managed to, what his mother would have called 'put his foot in the jamb and keep it there.'

His new friend, who said 'he had really conceived a very high opinion of Mr. Kelly's abilities,' chanced one day to be expressing his regret at the impossibility of getting out of town even for a week. 'I have not a soul now to help me,' he went on, 'except the clerk, and he really is worse than no one.'

It was then Bernard offered to look in for a few hours each day to correct proofs and look over manuscripts.

'I want something to amuse me and occupy my time,' he explained ; speaking like a person who had the wealth of Rothschild at his back, and the length of days of the patriarchs stretching in front ; 'and I should really be delighted if you would make use of me—supposing you think me capable,' modestly added Barney, who had taken the measure of his man pretty accurately.

The offer was instantly accepted, and though Mr. Kelly received no salary, so many things were 'put in his way,' correcting, re-writing, touching up, and softening down, that this nominally unremunerative post proved really a valuable addition to his income. Further, it brought him in contact with quite a new set of

literary people; amongst others he met Miss Yarlow, who often looked at him very curiously and said, 'I can't think where I have seen you before.'

Upon these occasions Mr. Kelly was wont to remark he thought he must have met her somewhere, and then the two would go over a list of the houses they had perhaps entered once, and the people who had happened to send them an 'At Home' card; and so, airing their intimate acquaintanceship with and knowledge of the aristocracy and gentry, mutually humbugged each other.

For in truth Miss Yarlow and Mr. Kelly had conceived as strong a mutual liking as such natures ever seem capable of developing. They were both selfish, both prudent, both capable, both determined to achieve success if success were to be gained by perseverance and pushing; but Miss Yarlow thought Bernard had means, and he imagined the lady possessed a pretty fortune and was highly connected. When he found out, as he did in some marvellous manner from Mr. Pierson, that she had been a 'nursery governess,' or something of the sort, it was wonderful how Mr. Kelly's 'warm

Irish heart' cooled towards her. His criticism of her next manuscript proved somewhat severe; and when she went again to the office it was only to find he no longer occupied his accustomed chair. Barney had at last got something good. He was editor of a quite new weekly journal, which had for its capitalists one of those fools mentioned by Mr. Lance Felton, who stand at the corners of the streets waiting eagerly for some one to take them in.

Mr. Kelly did not, however, intend to take his man in, as he honestly meant trying to make a success of an impossible venture, and he certainly felt very well satisfied with himself and his principal when he looked around the newly furnished room sacred to him, and gave audience to authors who hung trembling on his answers—as he even had listened in agony for the inevitable No, which, spoken in all sorts of tones, in all manners of offices, greeted his arrival in London.

One morning, he had just taken possession of his editorial chair; just laid a sheet of headed note-paper on his blotting pad before him, just dipped a new pen in the freshly

filled ink-bottle, when the clerk told off for his especial use, entering the room, presented him with a letter. It was from his mother ; in the pride of his heart he had been unable to resist the temptation of letting the good folks at Callinacoan know the Barney whom they had regarded as a good deal lower than themselves, was now ' a power ' in London ; and as he cut open the envelope with the editorial paper-knife, he wondered what she would find to say about his rise ; while his thoughts flew back to the time when she had told him ' to put his shoulder to the wheel, for it was of no use asking her to send any more money to keep him in idleness.'

But since it is always the unexpected which happens, so, instead of any triumphant rejoicing over her Barney's ' great future,' Mrs. Kelly's epistle proved rather to be a Jeremiad over what he had ' let slip past him.'

' Oh ! Barney dear, what d'ye think,' were the words with which the letter led off. ' Mr. Fortescue's dead, and hasn't left behind him as much of a will as you could light a candle with. So the old woman, they say, 'll have all

the property, or rather Robert Underwood will—ay, that's what they tell me. The whole of Sulby Park, and the grand furniture, and the horses, and the carriages, and the cows, and the pigs, and the gold, and the silver, and all the big houses the Fortescues own in London, and the money in the bank, and the Three per Cents., and everything that could be named almost. Barney, Barney, and you let all this slip past you for the sake of a dirty fifty pounds—why, you might have been as big a man as the Duke of Leinster! My heart feels bursting when I remember if you'd had the spirit of a mouse you'd have taken her to church, and then gone up bold like a man and made your terms with the brother. Oh! Barney, you're just another Esau, and all I hope is you won't come to the same bad end. You're mighty set up with that mess of pottage you call an editorship; but only think of the farms and demesnes, the river and the yearly income you've lost! And sure, though she wasn't young, she had the good blood in her veins, and she's not a bad sort, and has lived quietly and respectably since that thief of the world took himself off to America. But there

—it's no use lamenting ; a peck of care won't cure an ounce of trouble. I hope you'll let this be a warning to you not to think so much of yourself.

‘ Your heart-broken Mother.’

The note which Mr. Bernard Kelly had been about to write was not even begun on the morning when he read his ‘ heart-broken mother’s ’ communication. He sat in the editorial chair for a time like one stupefied ; then, taking his hat, he walked round into Essex Street, and sought the office of a solicitor with whom recent circumstances had made him acquainted.

This interview with the lawyer was upon the whole unsatisfactory ; nevertheless, that authority conceded there were some points in the Underwood case worth fighting—points Mr. Kelly did not believe the ex-groom would care to fight. He felt perfectly satisfied in his own mind that if the whole of the property could not be secured to the wife, a compromise of some sort might be made with Mr. Underwood, who would want to finger the money immediately, and prove possibly willing to

listen to reason rather than wait the result of a Chancery suit and an application for a divorce. Mr. Kelly had asked the solicitor questions that gentleman candidly confessed himself unable to answer off-hand. He said he should like to consult various authorities, and refer the matter to counsel. He fancied something might be done—at all events, he agreed with Bernard Kelly it would be a thousand pities for the lady to let everything go without a struggle.

If there were a single precedent in her favour, or if her case could be made a precedent, he did not believe any judge in the land would hand over an estate to the scoundrel Mr. Kelly described. He 'would think the case over and take the opinion of his partner, who was more up in that sort of thing than himself.'

'You might look in the day after to-morrow, Mr. Kelly,' he said, and Mr. Kelly told him he would do so; but scarcely was he out of the office before a more excellent plan suggested itself. He decided to start for Ireland that night, full of which resolve he turned into the Strand, and was making his way hastily to-

wards Temple Bar, when he ran across Mat Donagh and another congenial spirit standing at the door of the George. The pair had been lunching presumably — drinking certainly. Mat's usual austerity of manner was relaxed ; the starch in his immaculate collar and shirt-front did not seem quite so stiff as Barney remembered it ; the bow of his white cravat had got somewhat twisted and crumpled. On his waistcoat were vestiges of crumbs ; in his cheeks was a pinky colour attributable to wine, sound and old. He had evidently just finished the narration of a good story, for his friend was laughing loudly and, Mat himself did not disdain to evince some signs of merriment.

‘By Gad, sir,’ he was saying, backing across the pavement as he spoke, when Bernard Kelly, who had tried to avoid the encounter, came into collision with him.

‘I beg your pardon,’ apologized the new editor Mr. Donagh was in the habit of casually referring to as that ‘sneaking upstart.’

‘*Your servant, sir !*’ answered Mat, wheeling round, taking off his hat and making a bow so low, so ironical, it almost collected a crowd. ‘There goes the most unmitigated cad in

London,' he added, looking after the retreating figure, 'a fellow who came over here from his native bogs with scarcely a shoe to his foot.'

If Mr. Kelly had been superstitious, the sight of his old enemy, whom he had not come athwart for months, almost years previously, might have struck him as unlucky, as the sight of a red-haired man, or a hare, or anything else of that sort did in the days when people turned back from a journey if any such evil omen crossed their path; but Bernard was not superstitious; and accordingly, though his chance encounter irritated him a good deal, he went back to his office and got through the day's work well, and arranged everything for the time he must be absent; and feeling a very different person from the stranger who had with dazed and dazzled eyes looked upon the crescent of lamps at Euston long enough ago, crossed the platform rug on arm, followed by a porter carrying a small portmanteau, and took his seat in the 'Wild Irishman,' bound to reach Holyhead about one a.m. or a little after.

'This game is worth the candle,' he thought, as he pushed a five-pound note through the pigeon-hole of the booking-office. Only

imagine the change of times and position when the once impecunious Barney could afford and venture to throw sovereigns down in this fashion !

As the train whirled through the night he thought long and anxiously concerning the destiny of Mr. Fortescue's estate. *If* Mrs. Underwood could get a divorce ; *if* the lapse of time proved no bar to her ultimate freedom ; *if* an arrangement were possible with the former pad-groom ; *if* Mrs. Underwood were Miss Fortescue once more, and in possession of, say, a clear ten thousand pounds—what then ? Why then Bernard Kelly, Esquire, could lead her to the hymeneal altar, and literature and the Three per Cents. might contract a highly eligible alliance.

Ten thousand pounds was Mr. Kelly's figure ; he decided the lady would not be too dear or himself too cheap at that sum. Anyone who knew how to manage could do a great deal with ten thousand pounds, and Bernard fancied few were better able to cut his coat according to his cloth than himself. Yes, if ten thousand pounds were forthcoming he would marry her ; and accordingly, on the wings of prudence

if not of love, Mr. Kelly sped across England, and shipping his precious person at Holyhead on board the fine steamship *Munster* next morning about seven, after years of absence, once again set foot on his native soil. No Saxon could have thought less of that native soil than did Bernard Kelly. It was with the most supreme disgust and contempt he surveyed his countrymen and women from the ignoble eminence of a rickety jaunting-car, which conveyed himself and his fortunes from the Westland Road Station to the Imperial Hotel in Sackville Street. At Kingstown, leisure, if not occasion, had been wanting to enable him to study the humours of a land he had forsworn; but as they rattled through the streets of 'dear dirty Dublin,' as he looked at the capital of Ireland in her morning apparel, he felt he could not wonder at anything Englishmen said about that island, from which, about the time he exterminated toads and snakes, St. Patrick seems to have banished order and external cleanliness as well. It was not that Barney loved England more, but he liked Ireland less. He felt he had left civilization behind, and returned to a sort of modified

barbarism. He understood now what had once seemed a dark utterance, the remark of a lady, who said she always, on returning from Scotland, thanked Heaven when the name of the first station was called out south of the Border.

‘Think,’ she said, ‘what it is to feel free at one blow—of Scotch coal and the Scottish accent!’ Judge what it was to Barney Kelly to plunge back into the abyss from which he had emerged, and consider, ‘Such as these barbarians are, I, even I, might have remained!’

He did not remain very long at the Imperial, where he partook of breakfast and consulted a time-table. A long cross-country journey lay before him, and he wanted to time his movements so as to reach Sulby Park in the gloaming. He knew Callinacoan and Mrs. Underwood: he desired to elude the curiosity of the one and arouse the interest of the other, and accordingly fixed upon a town a few miles distant from his birthplace, from whence he proposed to drive over to what in the ‘dreadful phraseology’—to quote Mat Donagh—of the neighbourhood would have been called ‘his calf-ground.’

Arrived at Sulby Park, he delivered a letter to the sedate butler, and said :

‘ Perhaps Mrs. Underwood may wish to send an answer.’

No human being, no detective, not the mother who bore him, could have recognised the ‘just-caught’ Barney of the commencement of this story, in the fashionably dressed, self-possessed, handsome man who was at once ushered into the library, on the shelves of which were ranged some of those books that had helped to gain him the five pounds where-with he paid his fare.

Altogether a most curious experience. For my own part, I marvel those who have so wonderfully risen never seem able to reproduce intelligibly the impressions such a total change of circumstances must have produced. Perhaps they do not care to recall even to themselves the past an outsider would imagine must have held some pleasant hours. Yet it all seems such a mistake. Bad as we account the world—I am sure I do not know why—it yet honours a man true and faithful enough to say from what he has risen and how ! There seemed a fascination for Bernard Kelly in the

brown gilt-letter binding of those old books of plays, for he stood looking at them while his mind took a swift but comprehensive review of the years that had passed since he sat beside the river reading for hours together.

It all came back to him: the rush and hurry of the water flowing over the gravel, fretting against the stones; the dipping branches swaying with the current; the sun streaming through the trees upon his book, casting a tracery of leaves across the page; Miss Fortescue coming to meet him, and——

The door of the library opened at that moment—a soft muffled swish of paramatta and crape sounded in his ear—two white hands were extended towards him, and Mrs. Underwood's remembered voice was saying:

‘Oh, Mr. Kelly! oh, Mr. Kelly!—this is kindness and friendship indeed!’

He took both her hands in his; for a moment there was utter silence. She could not see him for the tears which blinded her, but he could see her; and he availed himself of the opportunity to take a comprehensive survey of a lady he meant, if all things worked favourably, should one day be his wife. The result was

satisfactory. She did not look much older, and black suited her—yes, she must always wear black. She had never been handsome, but, comparing her with many of her sex, she was really not plain. Her figure, always elegant, struck Barney with quite a new surprise ; yes, she would do very well indeed. He could not, it is true, make her younger ; but then if she were younger he might have stood a poor chance of marrying her.

‘ Dear Mrs. Underwood,’ he said at last, ‘ I feel truly sorry for you—I thought you might want a friend ; and so the moment I heard the sad tidings I decided to come and ask in person if I could be of any assistance. I trust you do not consider this visit an intrusion.’

‘ No—no—*most* grateful—such kindness is—I shall be more composed presently.’

He led her to a seat, and leaning over the back of the chair, began at once to open the business that had brought him in such a hurry across the Channel. He knew her of old, and was perfectly well aware, although it suited her to seem absorbed in grief, she could listen to what he said, and understand it too. He advised that she should at once travel to

London, and obtain the best opinion on her case. If she were not to be left utterly at the mercy of a man who had proved himself undeserving her generous trust, action of some sort should be taken immediately.

He did not pay much attention to her broken utterances, which told him 'she deserved her fate,' 'it was a fitting punishment,' and so forth ; he kept steadily to the main question, and said plainly if she did not wish to be left a pauper, she ought to put her affairs into the hands of some firm of solicitors and do exactly as they advised. As a large part of the Fortescue property was situated in London, he thought she had better direct her attack from that capital. 'Besides which,' added Mr. Kelly, 'I shall always be at hand to help and consult. I could not help and direct you here—people will talk, and a woman situated as you are cannot be too careful of appearances.' He had been so careful of appearances, he meant to keep this visit a secret even from his own relations. He told her how he had come and where he was going ; he would not partake of any refreshment or make any lengthened stay ; he wanted to catch a late train

back to Dublin, and must cross to Holyhead *en route* for London next morning. If she wrote to him he would secure suitable lodgings and meet her at Euston.

Mrs. Underwood said she need not write : she would do exactly what he told her. 'It is so sweet,' she went on, 'to feel one has a friend in whom one can trust entirely ; I feel that with you, Mr. Kelly ; I am able to put my hand in yours, and say, "Wherever you lead me I will go, for I know you will find some means of extricating me from this labyrinth of doubt and misery into which I have blindly and foolishly strayed."' '

So it was settled that Mrs. Underwood should follow Mr. Kelly to London, and that no time must be lost in declaring war against the recreant husband. Everything Barney advised was done. Lawyers were found who 'saw no difficulty about the matter.' A divorce was to be sought for, evidence from America procured ; Mr. Underwood's hands kept off the property pending the result of whatever suit or suits it might be found expedient to institute ; and Mr. Kelly was beginning to think he had perhaps under-estimated the

probable amount the future Mrs. Kelly might bring him for dowry, when, one day, calling to know the result of an interview she had been summoned to at her solicitors', Mrs. Underwood met him with a radiant countenance and the words :

‘ Congratulate me !’

‘ Certainly,’ agreed Mr. Kelly, surprised. ‘ What has happened ?—have they heard from him ?’

‘ Of him,’ amended the lady.

‘ And does he propose a compromise ?’

She shook her head.

‘ Any fresh evidence ?’

‘ He will never trouble me any more.’

‘ What do you mean ?’ asked Mr. Kelly, a little impatiently. ‘ He does not, I suppose, give up *all* claim to the property ?’

‘ He can never make a claim,’ she answered. ‘ He is dead.’

‘ Dead !’ repeated Mr. Kelly, really stunned for a moment, not only by the intelligence, but by the way the widow communicated it. Then, as his senses returned to him, he began to consider that so far from cutting the knot of the difficulty, Mr. Underwood’s decease might ac-

tually make it harder to undo. 'When did he die?' he asked.

'*Just ten days before my brother,*' said Mrs. Underwood, with an exultation even her training could not enable her to repress.

'Well!' exclaimed Barney, 'well—I am amazed!' but in his heart he did not feel pleased.

Foolish and weak though he knew her to be, he could not think Mrs. Underwood would fling herself and her fortune at the head of a man who had nothing to offer save himself and a literary reputation by no means of the highest order.

But he need not have been uneasy. Mrs. Underwood was only too glad to give her former admirer to understand she would gladly bestow upon him everything she possessed, and accordingly, in due course of time, Mrs. Kelly, making a 'convenient' hamper serve as an excuse, indited the following epistle to Miss Bridgetta Cavan, Abbey Cottage :

'As ye, maybe, haven't heard the great news about Barney, I write to tell you he's a made man at last—married to Miss Fortescue that

was of Sulby Park. She has *thousands* a year, besides gold and silver and jewels, and furniture and house linen, and lands and mansions, and I couldn't tell you what all. And he'll be in Parliament soon, and maybe a lord or a marquis, before we know where we are. It's me's the proud woman this day ; I don't know how to contain myself for the joy. They've sent fifty pounds a piece to the priest and the Church minister for the poor of Callinacoan, which will buy a mountain of blankets and flannel petticoats ; and they do say the minister's own children have new clothes on them already out of it. Barney told the priest if he'd get his father to keep from the drink, he might ask what he liked in reason ; but indeed, it's neither priest nor pope either will wean him from the whisky bottle. Sulby Park is to be let, and the happy pair have taken a grand house in London all among the quality. I'm in such a tremble of happiness I can't write more.'

'And I,' said Mr. Donagh, when he heard the news—and in his tone there was the dignity of an anathema on a state of society

in which such things could be—‘ And *I*, with fifty times his talent, and ten thousand times his heart, am a mere drudge, a hack at the beck and call of any ruffian who cares to secure my services for a paltry twenty per cent. Many a man would turn atheist, but I think and believe there is a world where these things will all be set right;’ and then he wept, and Miss Bridgetta wept, and so did her niece; and Miss Cavan murmured something about the ‘ devil’s luck,’ and a distinguished character who ‘ takes care of his own,’ and they were all much comforted by the hope that Barney might find a ‘ thorn in his foot yet.’

If they had only known it, Barney had a thorn there already. He was dissatisfied. Having almost all other good, he desired yet one thing more—to excel as a novelist !





CHAPTER IV.

THE NEW FIRM.

HAD anyone told Mr. Bernard Kelly on that evening when they were storm-stayed together hard by St. Saviour's Church that the eccentric Mr. Felton he a few hours later had the privilege of beholding retiring to rest under a counter in Sise Lane was destined to change the whole aspect of publishing, and to set every Miss throughout the country who had learned to write scribbling stories under the idea there was nothing to do save send in her slipshod manuscript, and receive a handsome cheque in return, it is doubtful, conversant as his metropolitan experiences had rendered him with strange vicissitudes, whether he would not have laughed

the idea scornfully aside as preposterous in the extreme.

And yet duly and truly this all came to pass, not from the slightest desire on the part of Lance Felton that any but what he would in his simple language have called ‘crack authors’ should receive due reward for their labour—but owing to the mere force of the machinery he himself set in motion.

Mr. Kelly had been nearly eight years in London. The wonder of his marriage was more than a twelvemonth old ; he had dropped into a humdrum, wealthy, respectable, wearisome society, which he was wise enough to know meant social and pecuniary safety ; after a gallant struggle the impossible venture had gone down in a sea of debt—all hands, however, being saved except the capitalist, printers, and paper-makers, who in such cases, for some inscrutable reason, never seem to count—and the now wealthy author, having nothing at the moment on the stocks specially calculated to feed his own literary ambition and the vanity of a wife whose pride in and greed of praise for him were insatiable, bethought him of collecting his series of street sketches from

the various journals and magazines in which they had appeared, and getting Mr. Vassett to publish them. Knowing how utterly Mr. Kelly's worldly circumstances had altered, Mr. Vassett tried hard to induce that worthy to run a portion of the risk; but, as Mrs. Kelly never wearied of telling her Callinacoan gossips, 'Barney wasn't born yesterday,' and altogether pooh-poohed the suggestion.

Accordingly the matter ended as might have been expected—the astute Englishman proved no match for the astuter Irishman—more especially when that Irishman appeared in Craven Street with thousands a year at his back.

It was 'take it or leave it;' and little as Mr. Vassett felt disposed in those days to take anything, he could not quite reconcile himself to letting a good book on a just then taking subject, written moreover by a man who kept his carriage and pair, and had menservants and maidservants, and visited great people, be brought out by another house, perhaps even by that detested new house in Burleigh Street which was, to quote the exact words concerning the matter generally in use at that period, playing the 'devil with the trade.'

While Mr. Kelly's 'gutter fictions'—as one envious critic ill-naturedly re-christened his book—were in the earliest stage of publication, Mr. Vassett one day ventured to show him a little of his mind concerning the men who were 'ruining everything, and could not by possibility benefit themselves.'

'I had a novel here,' proceeded Mr. Vassett, waxing confidential, for this was a grievance about which he really felt he could not hold his peace any longer, 'that with judicious management I thought might be made to return the author a satisfactory amount—two hundred and fifty pounds; and though I am not in the habit of offering such sums in the first instance—not, in fact, till I see how the subscription goes—still, I did in this case write to say I would pay it. I got no answer for a few days—then down came the author for his MS. He had sold it for five hundred pounds, and was to get more if the sale proved good. I see the work advertised this morning in the *Times*, at the head of the Burleigh Street list—which, by the way, occupies half a column.'

'Who are they?' asked the successful man negligently—authorship and the things apper-

taining thereto did not seem to him matters of quite such vital importance as they had once done.

‘Felton and Laplash—men without a sixpence of their own—they are the talk and wonder of the trade. Surely you must have heard of them.’

‘I dare say I have,’ answered Barney; ‘yes, I’m sure I have. Who is Felton?—that name at all events seems familiar—ah! now I remember.’

‘He is a friend of the Dawtons, whom you used to know,’ said Mr. Vassett, not perhaps sorry to give the prosperous author this sly dig.

‘Whom I know still, Mr. Vassett,’ amended Barney, with a graceful inclination of his head, which caused the publisher to consider what a difference the possession of a large income makes in a man’s manner.

‘Oh! I beg your pardon, I am sure,’ he answered nervously; ‘I only thought from something Mr. Dawton said you were not exactly——’

Mr. Kelly laughed, and asked whether if Mr. Vassett were left fifty thousand pounds,

he should at once consider it necessary to dis-embarrass himself of half in order to oblige various persons with whom he might have once dined. ‘Honestly,’ proceeded Barney, ‘I was and am quite willing to help my friends in any moderate way, but unhappily their expectations have grown with my means, which after all are not *my* means ; they are my wife’s.’

Barney was always very careful to make this point quite clear. *He* had nothing save what he could earn—the carriage he drove in, the horses that drew it, the coachman on the box, the footman in attendance, were all Mrs. Kelly’s. He had the use of the carriage, he lived in the great West End house on sufferance, he ate and drank of the best on the same terms. Of course, this was the most enormous fiction, for in his marriage, as in everything else, Mr. Kelly had taken sufficient care of Number One.

Still this was not sufficient reason why a man who was quite willing to give a five, or ten, or even under extraordinary compulsion a twenty-pound note to Dawton *père* should be branded as ungrateful when he refused him,

say, five hundred pounds to spend in some utter foolery.

Mr. Vassett was not insensible to the suggested parable. He had never much liked either Mr. Dawton or Mr. Kelly, and consequently he felt able fairly to judge between them. No doubt old Dawton had thought to swoop down on his prey, and no doubt Mr. Kelly had repelled him. No doubt, also, Mr. Kelly was quite right ; and yet Mr. Vassett, a most prudent man himself, felt he would have admired Barney more had that gentleman proved a little less prudent.

These are the troublesome inconsistencies in the world which must for ever lead people astray. And yet to anyone acquainted with the ups and downs of life, how far preferable it seems to have to do with the man who is all worldly than with him who has a thousand pleasant impulses leading him, and enticing you to follow where is no fruit (for you) worth gathering—nothing but the deceptive greenness of the barren fig-tree. To Barney's credit be it said, he never led anybody astray ; he did not promise great deeds and leave other people to fulfil them. I declare solemnly,

when I remember the things I have known done in London, as it might seem in the mere wantonness of sport ; the offers of help made—help which was not asked for, and never would have been thought of being asked for, that of course ended in nothing ; the cruel stabs of disappointment inflicted quite unnecessarily upon hearts whose only failings were distrust of self and too much trust in others ; the hopes deferred from day to day and week to week, it could not have been intended from the first should result in anything—I feel I like Bernard Kelly, for at least no word of his ever lost a woman an hour of her honest work, or a man his 'bus fare through any even implied promise he failed to keep.

From Mr. Vassett's upon the day in question he went straight to his club ; and searching the *Times*, soon found Messrs. Felton and Laplash's list.

He was amazed—the list comprised the names of authors any of the great houses might have been glad to secure. Could this Felton be identical with the man who wanted to stop and look at the lights in the river—the thing seemed not merely improbable but im-

possible. 'It must be a brother, or some more distant relative,' he considered. 'No doubt the Dawtons know the whole connection.' Mr. Kelly was aware the Dawton circle of acquaintances, though amusing, could scarcely be called select. Yes; no doubt whatever it was quite another Felton, and not Lance and his friend Noll. What had become of them both? he wondered—a singular pair—truly as singular a pair as even he had ever met.

Spite of a few ill-natured criticisms, the sketches proved a great success. In the main they were extremely well reviewed, and Mrs. Bernard Kelly went among her friends in jubilant mood—wearying a great many of them, to tell the truth, by the manner in which she sang with different words one eternal tune—'My husband.'

In society, however, people are so accustomed to be bored, that, providing the operation be performed by some one sufficiently rich and fashionable, complaints are rarely heard. Mr. Kelly's acquaintances laughed a little sometimes, it is true—but immediately recollecting what was 'due to their order,' said, 'Her affec-

tion is very beautiful,' and 'What a model of a husband he must be!'—with various other original remarks of the same nature, all commendatory of the happy pair. One night, after a more than usually laudatory notice of the sketches had appeared in a morning paper, the last post brought this note to Barney.

'DEAR SIR,

'If you have any MSS. by you of which you wish to dispose, we shall be happy to meet you on your own terms.

'Yours faithfully,

'FELTON AND LAPLASH.'

Now this was certainly not such a letter as Mr. Lance Felton might have been supposed likely to indite; and after thinking the matter over for some time, Mr. Kelly decided to answer it in person. Since Mr. Vassett had broached the subject of the new firm, many persons had spoken to him about the 'wonderful splash' it was making. Twelve months previously the names of the persons composing it were unknown; now they were the dread and detestation of all the old publishers.

‘It can’t last, you know,’ people said ; but still, while it did last, authors naturally thought they might as well have share of whatever was going. Messrs. Felton and Co.’s mode of doing business seemed eminently simple—it consisted in looking out for names and trying to bag them. Powder and shot apparently were regarded as merely trifles in the transaction. An author of any celebrity had only to mention his own price, and somehow the money was forthcoming. In the history of literature nothing like the doings of Felton and Laplash had ever been known before, and it is earnestly to be hoped nothing resembling such doings ever may be known again. Had the business been *bonâ fide*, a good deal might here be said in its favour, but it was rotten from the first as the South Sea Swindle. If a sufficient number of books could have been sold even to cover the mere outlay, leaving the barest profit to the partners, the house had never come down with the crash it did ; but, as a matter of fact, taking the works they brought out as a whole, enough copies never were sold (legitimately) to warrant the prices offered to writers.

When an almost unknown author who had only received twenty pounds for his previous production was run up by Messrs. Felton and Laplash to two hundred, the climax of absurdity seemed to be reached. If he had been old china he could scarcely have fetched more, and instead of china of any sort he was often only most inferior clay. His book was frequently not worth even twenty pounds. Talk of Tom Tiddler's Ground, why, here it was in Burleigh Street, the only marvel being that the Duke of Bedford did not put in his claim for treasure-trove and so sweep the literary decks.

Unknown authors had not the faintest chance. Genuine worth was at a greater discount in Burleigh Street than it had ever before sunk to in any publishing office in London.

'We can't be bothered reading manuscripts here,' said the head of the firm; 'but bring us anything with a good name at top, and it goes straight to the printers,' which was indeed literally the case; and at the printers, as everywhere else the house went, expense seemed no object. Sober men of business

rubbed their eyes, and, prophesying ruin and disaster, held for a time aloof; but while they were expecting the deluge it did not come, and so, after a short delay, persuading themselves 'times were a good deal changed even within their memory,' and feeling satisfied somebody 'with a lot of money' must be in the 'background,' they approached Burleigh Street with cautious steps, and were soon drawn into that mad current, the strength and velocity of which were becoming famous throughout all England.

The feeling dominant in Barney's mind while wending his way towards Covent Garden was curiosity; and as he walked down Burleigh Street he looked around, almost expecting to see some publishing palace meet his eye. In this he was, however, disappointed; the premises of the great firm consisted simply of two small shops, between which a door of communication had been broken—the walls were of the roughest—the floor of the oldest—the fittings of the rudest and scantiest description.

'Any plank serves,' said the chief one day, when an officious friend suggested the desira-

bility of having things a little more elegant, or even comfortable—‘across which you can sell two thousand pounds’ worth of books a day—and that is what I have done over that old counter. No, you won’t persuade me into your French polish and your lacquer and all that sort of humbug. I am not going to change my luck for any man living. What d’ye say about ladies?—Lord love you, much *you* know on *that* subject. If I liked to set up shop in a cellar I’d soon have enough of them trooping down the steps. They come here in their silks and satins and furs, and trailing dresses and all the rest of it; and you should just have a chance of listening to how they go on. It’s “What a quaint, delightful place!”—and “Oh, how charming!”—“So perfectly unconventional”—“So snug and homelike”—and “You’ll dine with us, won’t you, on Thursday?—just a few friends—Portland Place—eight o’clock.” Then I say, “I’ll dine with you if you like, but I won’t take your manuscript;” and then they laugh, and don’t believe me. But it is true, for all that—one is obliged to draw the line somewhere.’

From which specimen of the new publisher’s

style of conversation, the reader will instantly perceive it was Mr. Lance Felton, who, having at last achieved greatness, had all unconsciously set himself to work that social revolution, the result of which he could not with all his sharpness foresee—and the end of which it would, even now, be extremely imprudent for any man to predicate.

Yes, it was indeed Mr. Lance Felton, and no other man of the same name, who, when Barney entered the shop, chanced to be in evidence on the other side of the ‘fortunate plank.’

‘Hillo!’ cried the great publisher, as he beheld his St. Mary Overy acquaintance; ‘what wind has blown *you* here?’

‘Your letter,’ answered Barney.

‘I never wrote you any letter, though I should have written to you long ago if I had known your address.’

‘Well, somebody, at any rate, sent a letter. Here it is;’ and Barney handed the missive over the counter.

‘But this is to Mr. Kelly—the author of “Street Sketches.”’

‘I am Mr. Kelly.’

‘God bless me ! Why, I thought he was some great swell.’

‘Did you ?’ said Barney. He could not have prevented the blood rushing into his face at this unexpected slap if he had died for it.

‘Oh ! I didn’t intend any offence,’ exclaimed Mr. Felton quickly. ‘What I meant was a tip-topper, regular out-and-outer, aw-awing sort of fellow. You understand, don’t you ?’

‘Yes,’ agreed Barney, ‘I understand.’

‘And everybody was in the same story ; I can’t imagine how they got hold of the idea,’ proceeded Mr. Felton, with such evident ignorance of there being anything in his words at which Mr. Kelly could take offence, that the original sin of his first remark became deadlier with each later utterance. ‘The street you live in though, I dare say, may have given rise to the notion. You lodge there, I suppose.’

‘Yes, I’m only a lodger,’ answered Barney.

‘You don’t reside with your grandmother, then, now ?’

‘No, with my wife.’

‘Oh ! you’re booked also, are you ? I can’t

help thinking marrying is a great mistake—at least till a man knows what he is going to be and do. If I had waited now——’ and here Mr. Felton paused, perhaps in order to give himself an opportunity of considering how many duchesses and marchionesses might have suggested alliances with him in exchange for the publication of books of travels, poems, reminiscences, and so on.

‘How’s your friend?’ asked Barney, anxious to lead the publisher away from purely personal matters—‘Noll, you called him.’

‘He’s all right; he has got into a first-rate berth now.’

‘In the philanthropic line?’

‘No; something better by far. He is manager of the Westminster and Pimlico Circulating Library Co., Limited.’

‘Stealing the shareholders’ apples now, perhaps, instead of the squire’s,’ suggested Barney quietly.

The flush which had a few moments previously overspread his own face was now reflected in a deeper tint on that of Mr. Lance Felton.

‘Oh, come, I say,’ entreated the publisher,

‘don’t be too hard on a fellow. That was one of my mistakes—unfortunately it always is one of my mistakes when I take half a teaspoonful too much—I must have been awfully drunk that night to mention the matter. Fact is, it was all a bit of fun that I used to delight in repeating to tease poor old Noll. We have now, however, made an agreement, that as amongst strangers such remarks are liable to misconstruction, I am always to choke myself off, or let myself be choked off when I begin. There never was a word of truth in the whole story—there couldn’t have been, for the squire had no apples.’

‘Perhaps there was not even a squire,’ said Barney.

‘You are right, there was not,’ answered Mr. Felton eagerly; ‘there was only his widow the squiress, and it was because her children got so many aches and pains in the fruit season she had the orchard cut down.’

‘What a very curious thing to do,’ remarked Barney; ‘I suppose that happened almost before your friend was born.’

‘While he was still in arms—and as there was not another orchard to speak of within

ten miles, he could not have stolen the apples, could he ?

‘It would have been difficult for him, certainly.’

At this juncture the outer door opened again, giving admission to a stiff-built man, who, slouching lazily in, with both hands in his pockets, let the door slam behind him. Lance put both his hands to his ears and ground his teeth at the noise.

‘Now, why could you not have shut that door, instead of allowing it to bang?’ he asked.

A muttered and wholly unintelligible reply was the only answer vouchsafed, as the indolent gentleman walked round the counter, and took up a position from which he could dissect Barney’s features at his leisure.

‘What do you think, Zack?’ asked Mr. Felton, recovering his good-humour as speedily as he had lost it. ‘This is the Mr. Kelly we all imagined to be such a heavy swell. We have just been laughing over the idea—why, he turns out to be an old friend of mine!’

‘O——h!’ said Zack, turning away, while he drawled out this monosyllable in a manner

which seemed to Barney little less than superhuman, as though the contemplation of Mr. Kelly's face had suddenly lost all charm for him.

'Come into my sanctum, won't you?' entreated Mr. Felton. 'Now Laplash is here, I can go off duty.'

Judging from appearances, Mr. Laplash thought he could go off duty too, for he followed them into the triangle styled an office, where, taking up a position with his back against the wall, he stood silently surveying his partner and the successful author.

'Now we'd better get to business,' suggested Mr. Felton; 'what have you to offer us, Kelly?'

Barney winced a little—he had not been prepared for such an amount of familiarity, but, nevertheless, answered the question with tolerable composure.

'Nothing, except what has appeared before?' said Mr. Felton. 'That's bad, Zack, eh?'

Zack, replying to this interrogatory with a grunt of acquiescence, Barney ventured to observe Mr. Vassett had never found that the

fact of previous publication in a magazine interfered with the sale of a volume.

‘Oh, Vassett!’ exclaimed Mr. Felton, with a lofty scorn; ‘don’t talk to us of Vassett—what he does, or finds, or says, or thinks, is no rule for us;’ at which utterance Mr. Laplash laughed a dog’s laugh—his face remaining all the time perfectly grave in its expression; the right-hand corner of the upper lip alone showing the slightest sign of movement.

‘No, no,’ went on Mr. Felton, encouraged by this sign of approval, almost imperceptible though it was; ‘we don’t want any Vassetts held up here for our example. We’ve shown that good gentleman a thing or two already, and before we’ve done with him we’ll show him and others a thing or two more. But now to settle with you. How much do you want for the lot?’

Really Mr. Lance Felton’s way of putting things was too dreadful! Never since that memorable day when he got his rejection from the sub-editor of the *Galaxy* opposition had Mr. Kelly felt himself of so little account. What did he want for the lot, indeed!

as though he were selling old clothes or the flotsam and jetsam of rubbish left at the tail end of an auction.

‘I have no particular desire to sell,’ he said at last, ‘but if you wish to buy you had better make me a bid.’

In a minute Mr. Felton’s pencil went to work; then, pushing the paper across the narrow table, he observed, ‘I think that’s about all I can do.’

Mr. Kelly looked at the figures, returned the paper, smiled, rose, and took his hat.

‘As a matter of curiosity,’ he began, ‘I should like to know what you meant by saying you would meet me on my own terms. Do you suppose for a moment,’ Barney went on, waxing virtuously irate, ‘I have been accustomed to write for such a pittance as you have the assurance to offer?’

‘Don’t you think it enough, then?’ asked Mr. Felton; ‘I assure you—Lapdash, just look here, will you?’ and he thrust the paper towards his partner, who, having altered the figures, and again added up the sum total, returned it to the vivacious Lance with the merest but most significant nod.

‘Will that do?’ said Mr. Felton.

‘Yes, that is something nearer the mark,’ replied Barney.

‘Very well, then, we will send you on the agreement.’

‘Thank you.’

‘And “rush” one book, at all events, as soon as possible.’

‘Will that not be somewhat imprudent, considering how recently a work of mine has been brought out?’

‘Exploded nonsense!’ commented Mr. Felton; ‘there are some authors I only wish I could get a book from every week in the year.’

‘The wisdom of the ages, then, seems foolishness to you?’

‘I should think so, indeed. I am my own wisdom, and my own age, and my own everything; and if you can show me any other man who could have done as much as I have done out of the same material, I’ll give you leave to call me what you like.’

‘Dear me!’ I have no desire to call you by any other name than that of Felton,’ said Barney deprecatingly. ‘I only imagined I might venture to make a suggestion

concerning the time of publication of my own work.'

'Then you were mistaken,' retorted the genial publisher. 'No, sir. I allow no interference here. I bring out my books when I think I will, and I don't bring them out when I think I won't. If I once allowed that sort of thing,' he added viciously, 'I might soon give up command of the ship. See who that is, Zack; and mind, unless it's somebody worth seeing, I'm engaged. I have about a hundred letters to write before post.'

'I won't detain you longer, then,' said Barney, taking his hat.

'Oh! I didn't mean that as a hint, believe me. It is only that Zack will not keep out bores. He knows well enough who to let in and who to keep out, but he allows himself to be talked over.'

'Does he never talk himself?' asked Barney demurely.

'Talk? I wish he didn't!'—and Mr. Felton tossed some of the papers on the table about angrily, as if unpleasant memories had been aroused by even the mention of his partner's powers of speech. 'There was something I

wanted to ask you, I know—you have put it out of my head—oh ! I remember : Did you ever happen to hear who wrote “ Ashtree Manor ” ?

‘ Some one of the name of Lely, wasn’t it ? ’

‘ That’s a mere *nom de guerre*. ’

Barney stared a little at the speaker, and then answered, ‘ I know nothing more about the matter, then. ’

‘ Look here, ’ went on Mr. Felton, ‘ I wouldn’t mind tipping a five-pound note to anyone able to give me the right name and address. Lots of people say they knew who wrote the book, but then it turns out they don’t. *Now I want that author.* ’

‘ Why don’t you ask Mr. Vassett, then ? ’

‘ Have—he declines to give the slightest clue. ’

‘ Why not send a letter to the author through him ? ’

‘ No ; I’ll not do that either. You’ve read the book, I suppose—wonderful ! I’d give anything to know who wrote it. ’

Barney admitted the work so enthusiastically spoken of was clever ; and considering he had at home a novel of his own in manuscript which he thought a great deal more wonderful

than 'Ashtree Manor,' this modified praise was perhaps quite as much as could be expected from him.

'Clever—I believe you!' cried Mr. Felton, 'and then there is another by the same fellow, "Due East." And to think of Vassett having had two such books! Lacere was in here the other day; you remember him?'

'I remember his office,' said Barney, a place which indeed he was never likely to forget. 'I never saw him.'

'He's not much of a see,' observed Mr. Felton; 'came here dunning. What do you think of that?'

'Do you owe him any money?'

'Well, I had some from him in the old days, and he said he called thinking I should like to repay it—as if anybody ever wanted to repay money or to be reminded of a debt: besides, it is not always convenient—but, as I was saying,' Mr. Felton added hurriedly, and with some confusion, 'I asked him, as I ask everybody, about the author. "Had he ever heard his name?" "Yes." "What was it?" "Declined to tell me." "Did he know him?" "Very well indeed." "Did he ever see him?"'

“Occasionally.” “Would he give a message to him?” “Yes.” So then I sent word that whatever amount Vassett was giving him, I’d treble; but I’ve never heard another word on the subject. It was all brag, I’ve no doubt: he is as much acquainted with him as I am.’

‘Don’t you think,’ suggested Mr. Kelly, ‘that as a proof of the *bonâ fides* of your offer it might have been wise to give your former landlord a cheque for whatever amount you may have owed him?’

‘No; and I am not going to pay him—at least, not till I choose. I don’t see, because I have got a bit of meat for myself, every vulture in the kingdom is to have a share of it.’

‘But really, when you talk so recklessly of doubling and trebling the amount of authors’ remuneration——’

‘Look here,’ interrupted Lance, ‘I like you, and I don’t want to quarrel with you; but take a bit of advice—let me and my authors alone. I can manage my business without any help of yours. Bring the agreement about those books along with you, and you can have the money—that’s all concerns you, isn’t it?’

‘I am thankful at last to hear you make one

remark with which I can perfectly agree ;' and lest this happy state of things should come immediately to an end, Mr. Kelly took leave of Mr. Felton forthwith, and walked out into Burleigh Street literally stupid with surprise.

Spite of the lordly manner in which the versatile Mr. Felton referred to pecuniary matters, when Mr. Kelly carried his reprints round to Burleigh Street, a difficulty he had certainly not anticipated arose about that trifling matter of payment. The outer shop he found full of people, some of whom he knew, most of whom he did not. Conspicuous amongst the crowd was poor Mr. Dawton, with hand more shaky, eye more watery, speech more wearisome than of old. At once he fastened upon Barney, reminding that worthy of the 'pleasant days gone by,' when they were 'young together ;' when they travelled the country and 'drew crowded houses' to hear 'How's Maria ?'

'Lord ! Lord ! those were times !' cried Mr. Dawton, wiping his eyes. 'How the sovereigns used to tumble in ! I can hear their musical jingle now.'

'Yes, and you used to pocket them,'

thought Barney ; which indeed was too truly the case.

Mr. Dawton had not dealt quite fairly by his 'young friend' in the matter of that clever entertainment, but his only mistake was in having professed to do so. When beginning his London life, Barney would have been as willing to accept an actual fourth as a nominal half. He could not have made a half or even a fourth for himself, and he knew it, only Mr. Dawton need not have lied to him ; as a rule, however, people give themselves an enormous amount of unnecessary trouble in inventing falsehoods when the truth would serve much better.

'You know *him*,' said Mr. Dawton, turning an uncertain thumb over his left shoulder in the direction of Mr. Felton's office.

'Only in the slightest manner.'

'Ah, wonderful ! When I first knew him—but 'tis a tale to be whispered in thine ear anon. Hist !—the door opens.'

Which indeed the inner door did, to afford egress to a lady dressed in deep mourning, whom Lance escorted to her carriage bare-headed, with a respect which in so red a

Republican could be regarded as nothing short of marvellous.

‘Who is she?’ ran in a sort of buzz round the shop.

‘Don’t you know?’ said somebody, in an unmistakable Irish accent. ‘It’s the Hicks derelict.’

‘Mr. Kelly, please walk this way,’ cried Mr. Laplash; and Mr. Kelly, working his way into the triangular room, found himself alone with the senior partner, who asked him to be seated.

‘I’ve just made a bargain with the lady you may have noticed going out,’ said Mr. Felton, looking up from his writing. ‘She is a great person—a very great person indeed.’

‘She’s Lady Hilda Hicks, isn’t she?’

‘Yes, an earl’s daughter—and she piles everything of that sort on the top of her book. My word, she does open her mouth, and she won’t shut it again till filled. I only hope I’ll ever see my money back again. She can’t write a bit, in my opinion—but she sells. Here’s the manuscript;’ and Lance patted a goodly pile of square ruled paper.

‘Take care you don’t offend her, or she’ll

put you and your partner in her next book.'

'Let her—I don't care. She has asked me to go and see her one evening next week.'

'And are you going?'

'Don't know, I am sure. The fact is, I'm getting tired of standing about doorways, and ices and negus, and a sandwich perhaps. I'm due to-night at a very swell party at Shepherd's Bush—tip-top—all the ladies velvet and lace, and all the gentlemen with their hair parted down the middle, and eye-glasses, and patent boots. I must rig myself up a little, I suppose;' and here Mr. Lance Felton, with a self-satisfied smile which almost upset Mr. Kelly's powers of self-control, pulled forward the lapel of his new frock-coat—took a side glance over his left shoulder at the unexceptionable quality of the broadcloth in which he was clad—pulled down his white waistcoat—contemplated his nether garments and natty boots—and then glanced at Barney as one who felt tempted to say, 'See what money and fashion conjoined have achieved for the once unregarded and impecunious Lance!'

He so evidently considered his attire the

‘correct thing,’ even for evening wear amongst ladies clad in velvet and lace, and ‘swells who wore their hair parted down the middle,’ that Barney felt it would be most unkind to dissipate his illusion. Had there not been a time when he, Bernard, spite of all his quickness of perception and extraordinary power of adapting himself to circumstances, blossomed out in the matter of fancy vests and cornelian buttons and glittering studs—all of which vanities he soon learnt to eschew, replacing them with a Quakerish simplicity of attire which quite deceived Mr. Lance Felton, who, deciding ‘Kelly has enough to do to make the two ends meet,’ and would be duly impressed with anything in the way of swagger, proceeded—fingering his watch-chain—to remark: ‘I’ll have to get something different from this, of course—something more up to the mark, eh?’

‘I don’t think you could buy any guard that would look better,’ said Barney, who had indeed been admiring the article in question, and wondering where in the world Mr. Felton had picked up a piece of jewellery so quaint and in such excellent taste.

‘It does well enough in the office,’ answered Lance carelessly, ‘but I must wear something more like money when I go among the grandees. They do take such stock of a fellow. But now to get to business. Have you brought the agreement signed? Thanks—that’s all right. Here’s the duplicate’—and Lance dashed off an impetuous ‘Felton and Laplash’—‘and this you’ll find quite correct.’

Perhaps he expected Barney to pocket both documents without opening them; but if so, he was disappointed. Mr. Kelly first read the agreement quite through, and then unfolded the slip of paper Mr. Felton had handed him.

At the latter he looked for a moment most curiously; then he said:

‘May I ask what this is?’

‘Why, our acceptance at three months,’ answered Lance glibly. ‘The amount is all right, isn’t it?’

‘Yes,’ answered Barney, ‘the amount is all right; but I’m not going to take a bill for my work. Don’t entertain any delusion on that subject.’

‘Why not? everybody does; usual thing.

How do you suppose we are to carry on our business if we pay months and months before we get our returns ?'

'I'm sure I don't know, and I'm very sure I don't care ; only I'm not going to find you capital either in meal or malt. If at the end of three months you could not or did not meet your bill, where should I be ? No ; if that's your way of doing business, hand me back my agreement, and we will consider the matter at an end.'

During the course of this agreeable address, Mr. Lance Felton's face had changed in colour from red to purple, and from purple to white ; till finally, so great was his pallor that his very lips seemed bloodless.

'Well, you must be hard up,' he managed at last to say. 'If you had told me cash was such an object, the money should have been waiting for you. Come back in an hour, and I'll be ready for you. Will that do ?'

'Certainly,' agreed Barney, 'and meantime we may as well exchange agreements ;' which suggestion was accordingly carried into effect, with a running commentary from Mr. Felton, that 'thank God there was no suspicion

about him ;' ' his fault lay in quite an opposite direction ;' ' he believed every man to be honest till he proved himself a rogue, and even then he found it almost impossible to credit any actual cheating had been intended ;' ' sooner than imagine everyone he shook hands with to be a liar and a thief, he would hang himself or cut his throat '—with a good deal to the same effect, which was interrupted by the opening of the door and the appearance of Mr. Dawton's wig.

' Now, shut that door, will you ?' shouted Mr. Felton viciously. ' Can't you see I'm engaged ? Won't you take no for an answer ?' and then, as the poor old actor, appalled by the violence of this address, meekly withdrew his battered and wrinkled face, the publisher stigmatized him as an ' old fool,' and said he ' wouldn't—no, blanked if he would—have a parcel of drivelling antediluvians making a common lounge of his offices.'

Soft-heartedness could certainly not be reckoned amongst the weaknesses of Mrs. Kelly's Barney, and he felt no wild desire to make Mr. Dawton's cause his own. Nevertheless, when he passed out amongst the crowd waiting for

audience, and saw the collapsed figure of the 'world-renowned actor,' he took him by the arm, and leading him down Burleigh Street, pressed a couple of sovereigns into his hand, and bade him forget the roughness with which he had been treated.

' "Sharper than a serpent's tooth," ' sobbed poor Mr. Dawton ; 'and I made him, sir ; when I knew him first he was ragged and hungry, and I may say homeless ; and I took him to my house, and fed him, and clothed him ; and Ted taught him, and—and you see how he treats me, Mr. Kelly—as if I were a dog, sir—a dog.'

'Never mind him,' entreated Barney ; 'put a beggar on horseback and you know where he rides to. How is Mrs. Dawton ?'

Then and there in the Strand Mr. Dawton came to a standstill, and poured forth his tale of woe. His wife was ill ; Ted had married and gone abroad ; Will, having met with an accident, kept his bed ; Jim was trying his fiercest to prevent the ship sinking ; the youngest son had in despair accepted an engagement with some wandering minstrels.

‘A scattered household,’ finished Mr. Dawton; ‘The Wigwam will soon be deserted save by the squaw and the grizzled old Indian. Ah me! who would wish for length of days when he sees how they destroy the noblest trees in the forest? Had anyone told me twenty years back——’

‘I must bid you good-bye now, Mr. Dawton,’ interposed Barney, finding an appreciative crowd was collecting, ‘but I’ll see you soon again. I will make a point of going to The Wigwam;’ and cutting short Mr. Dawton’s effusive and maundering farewell, he crossed the street and walked rapidly westward. He could not refrain, however, from once looking back, and beheld, as he expected, Mr. Dawton eagerly making his way to the nearest tavern. ‘Poor old chap!’ thought the well-to-do author, and something very much like an earnest thanksgiving to God for having enabled him to steer clear of the rock on which he had seen so many a gallant barque founder, silently passed his lips.

Ere returning to Burleigh Street he went home, had his luncheon, took a turn in the Park with his wife, and finally got that lady

close upon five o'clock to set him down near his destination.

In the outer office he found only Mr. Laplash and 'Noll;' but the door of the inner apartment stood wide, and, as he appeared, the voice of Mr. Lance Felton was heard in greeting.

'Oh! so here you are at last. And now you are here, what have you got to say for yourself?'

'I have come for my money.'

'Good heavens!' shouted Mr. Felton, screaming with laughter; 'only hear this, Noll—he has come for his money! and he says it just as if he was a super going up for his screw on a Saturday. Oh! you'll be the death of me,' he went on. 'Poor fellow, poor fellow! now I dare say this amount is all you have between you and Slocum's.'

'I am not quite so badly off as that,' answered Barney, who scarcely understood and utterly failed to appreciate this delicate badinage. 'But still, I have no doubt I shall manage to find a use for your cheque.'

'Here it is, then,' said Mr. Felton; 'look that there is no mistake this time—do, pray!

And now, sir, just tell me what you mean by coming here with your false pretences and your poverty pleas, and looking as if you had never seen a ten-pound note in your life, and your lodger story, and all the rest of it—you, who have your horses and your carriages, and your livery servants, and your grand acquaintances, and a house in Grosvenor Street, where you can hang up your hat for the rest of your days ?

Thus reproved, Mr. Kelly took refuge in his usual formula. Everything belonged to his wife—he had nothing but what he could make. Her friends were good enough to ask him to their houses, but he could never forget he was only a poor author—with many more statements to the same effect, which were received with derision, and various ironical and objectionable remarks which made him wish he had never sold his reprints to the great firm which meant, so Mr. Felton explained, to ‘lead the trade a dance.’

‘We’ll waken them up a little,’ he said. ‘If Vassett and the rest of the slow-coaches never footed it before, they’ll have to foot it now, or make up their minds to stay behind for ever.’

Here's a list,' he added, thrusting the just issued *Athenæum* into Mr. Kelly's hand; 'did you ever see anything like that. There's scarcely a known author we haven't bagged. There—leave me all of you for a minute; I must just finish this letter before post. It's to that Lord with the hard name who went to Rome and back again, and wrote his soul's experiences both ways.'

'Oh! then you are going in for theology, are you?'

'I don't care what the —— I go in for,' retorted Mr. Felton, with cheerful profanity, 'so long as it pays; if Tom Paine were only alive again, I'd advertise him and the Archbishop of Canterbury in the same column. But now, clear out, please; time's getting on.'

Thus exhorted, Messrs. Zack, Barney, and Noll retreated into the outer office, where they soon fell into easy and confidential chat.

'I am glad to hear you have dropped into a good berth,' observed Mr. Kelly to Noll.

'Well, I can't say it's a berth exactly to my mind,' answered that gentleman. 'I'd have liked something where I could feel of use to my fellow-creatures.'

‘Yes, that’s what he’s always on about,’ observed Mr. Laplash, with admiring appreciation. ‘He’s just as eager to be doing good as many a one is to be doing harm. If he picked up a half-crown in the gutter he’d know no rest till he had found the poorest and the dirtiest old woman he could benefit with it. That’s Noll, Mr. Kelly;’ and Mr. Laplash, humming an unmelodious tune, fell to whittling a bit of stick after this unexpected testimony to Noll’s perfections.

Barney looked at Noll and formed his own opinions, which he wisely refrained from expressing.

‘You see, Mr. Kelly,’ said Noll, addressing the rich man, and edging up to him with unctuous perseverance, ‘I do feel it on my mind and conscience that light literature is no sort of proper reading for immortal souls destined for heaven, or it may be doomed to hell. The novel mania oppresses me like a nightmare. They come to us hot pressed and gaudily bound. Soul-traps I can’t but consider them. But the bulk of our customers won’t look at anything else. I’d like to be out of the business, I would indeed. If you should hear of a nice

secretaryship now, Mr. Kelly, to some Christian association, or even a vacant post as collector to a worthy charity, I feel I could devote my energies to congenial work of that sort.'

No one could accuse Mr. Kelly of raising unfounded hopes merely to level them with the ground, wherefore he immediately answered that though Mrs. Kelly of course contributed liberally to religious societies and charitable institutions, she had no influence—none whatever.

'And so far as I am concerned I don't even subscribe,' added Barney, with a touching modesty which might have affected anyone susceptible to the softer emotions.

'Indeed I shouldn't mind,' proceeded Mr. Noll, in a monotonous sort of whine, serviceable, no doubt, for the purposes of Scripture-reading and street-preaching, 'taking charge of a compact estate composed of weekly tenants. I believe in such a position I might effect much good. I could enclose a tract suitable to the circumstances of each household in the rent-book, and say a word in season to the mothers; don't you agree with me, Mr. Kelly?'

'I dare say,' answered Barney; 'but my

wife has no property of the sort you indicate. If I should hear of anything likely to suit you I will let you know ; but it is not at all probable——’

At this juncture the outer door was pushed timidly open, and a bonnet, veil, jacket, and something inside these articles of apparel came slowly up to the counter.

Mr. Laplash, leaving his bit of stick, lounged forward to meet the new-comer, who addressed to him some remark which was perfectly inaudible, as at that moment a van came thundering down the street, shaking every pane of glass in the old edifice in which the new firm had established itself.

‘What d’ye want?’ asked Mr. Laplash, as soon as he could make himself heard, addressing the lady with the gruffness that seemed to do duty in Burleigh Street for ordinary civility.

‘Can I see either Mr. Felton or Mr. Laplash?’ she inquired nervously.

‘My name is Laplash,’ returned the second in command, with aggressive distinctness.

‘I—I—really don’t know that I ought to trouble you, but a long time ago you sent me

a message—and—as I—was passing—I thought I might call—but I feel—I——’

‘What’s your name?’ inquired Mr. Laplash, as if she were deaf, and he catechizing her.

‘You would not know my name if I told it you,’ she answered, scared apparently out of what few wits she possessed; ‘but I once wrote a book called “Ashtree Manor.”’

‘Open Sesame’ never produced a more magical effect than those two words. The flap on the counter was lifted and banged back on its hinges.

‘Come in,’ said Mr. Laplash, leading the way to the inner apartment, when, saying, ‘Lance, here’s “Ashtree Manor,”’ he stepped aside to let the lady cross the charmed circle.

‘God bless me!’ cried Lance, looking up from his writing; ‘why, I’ve done everything short of advertising for you in the *Times*.’

‘Have you?’ she answered, a little faintly.

‘Yes; sit down for a minute, will you?’ And so she sat and looked at the great publisher finishing his correspondence, and at Zack pasted up against the wall staring at her with all his might, and out into the dim office beyond, where the gas was not yet lighted,

and two figures stood hazily among the shadows, and she wished she had not turned into Burleigh Street, and longed with all the veins of her heart to be safe at home.





CHAPTER V.

MR. LOGAN-LACERE IS AMAZED.

THOUGH the world—their poor little world—remained ignorant of the fact, since the appearance of ‘Ash-tree Manor’ things had been going very badly indeed with the Logan-Lacere. Day by day, week by week, month by month, they drifted hopelessly astern. Ostensibly doing a good business—in reality doing a very fair business—Mr. Lacere’s incomings and outgoings failed utterly to meet. At the end of each half-year there was an ever-increasing deficit, which one memorable spring arrived at such proportions that Mr. Logan-Lacere at last, opening his mind to his wife, said, ‘I think, dear, I must stop.’

By this time Glen had learned a great deal about her husband's business and himself. Nevertheless, her knowledge of both was still superficial. Unless a man engaged in commerce is doing extremely well, he rarely cares to examine his debit and credit with the attention his liabilities at all events deserve; while, unless a woman goes down into the thick of the conflict, she is far too apt to take the man's representations as facts.

'I could make at least fifteen hundred a year,' says the struggling merchant, 'if I had only a thousand pounds capital.'

Find me the wife who, when the husband she loves and believes in tells her this pleasant tale, will not eagerly swallow the captivating bait, and I shall say you have discovered a new Eve.

Poor Glen—poor Mordaunt Logan-Lacere! had the wand of some enchanter gifted you with ten thousand pounds instead of the usual ten hundred everyone wants, you would have found yourselves at the end of twelve months precisely where you were at the beginning.

For the man did not live, or the woman either, who could have made head against the

Lacere connection. Ned Beattie was quite right when he said they would sink a man-of-war. Not merely were their pecuniary demands unceasing, but after a time—a short time indeed—Glen found their ideas weigh her down to the earth.

There are some people, perhaps because they do nothing themselves, who exercise a depressing, almost stultifying, effect on workers. It is doubtful whether even Mr. Logan-Lacere himself could have resisted the enervating effect of the home atmosphere, had he been exposed to it; but in his bachelor days he adopted the singularly wise course of rarely returning to the domestic hearth except to sleep, and since his marriage, being busier than ever, he seldom saw his female relations except upon those high days and holidays, when Glen usually made herself excessively disagreeable, and by the mere force of contrast must have made her husband consider his own relations paragons of amiability. Glen knew what all this semblance of genial good-humour was worth, but she had crushed and bruised herself so cruelly in trying to make the man they all regarded as a fortress to flee to in time

of trouble understand the position, that, abandoning open warfare, she resorted to a provoking sort of antagonism during the time she was forced to listen to reminiscences of the Lacere greatness and disparagement of the Logans, to gush about 'dearest Mordaunt,' to lamentations over a cut finger, to complaints anent the impertinence of her own servants, and general statements that all domestics were 'very different from what they used to be;' that kindness and consideration toward those in an inferior station of life were errors certain eventually to lead to disastrous results; that tradespeople were little, if at all, better than thieves; that the only human beings worth knowing, or considering, or remembering, were the Laceres; that all foreigners were treacherous, Americans detestable, the Irish more treacherous and detestable perhaps than either; that Glen herself was making a woeful mistake in refusing to adopt the Lacere code for her own guidance; that some day she would repent having rejected the love they so earnestly desired to lavish upon her, and find the friends she thought so much of would desert her totally.

To all this, and a great deal of the same interesting and improving sort of conversation, Glen found she could only—successfully—oppose one weapon—sarcasm.

Argument she soon found useless with people destitute of the faculty of reasoning; who were puffed up with exaggerated ideas of their own importance, and who, never having adventured out into general society, which they regarded as a howling wilderness, had not been, and were never likely to be, taught their level. But they had one weak spot in their armour. There existed a vulnerable spot, and Glen knew it. They could not endure ridicule; the barbed arrow of satire penetrated between the joints of their harness and inflicted lacerating wounds. If she were strong, Mrs. Logan-Lacere was not merciful, and she knew who came worst off the field after any particularly bitter struggle. About money her tongue was tied, but there remained a wide range of subjects on which to exercise her talents. It is not too much to say she studied and perfected a particularly annoying and incisive style of rapartee which rarely missed its mark, and proved almost as

fatal to her foes, the Laceres, as did the smooth pebble David selected from the brook and hurled from his sling into the forehead of the braggart Philistine.

One of the opposition ladies, who had for a considerable number of years read her Bible, with the satisfactory result that she felt she at all events need be under no apprehension about her place of abode in the next world, occasionally tried the effect of flinging at Glen one of those texts in general use when family matters come on the carpet, but she had better have left it alone. Ned Beattie's remark that he could in either the Old or New Testament beat Glen in a canter, was quite correct; but Mrs. Logan-Lacere's Scriptural knowledge was by no means to be despised. It was general as well as particular, and Miss Lacere, though she never confessed the fact even to herself, found she had made a blunder when she tried a wrestle with one to whom Biblical phrases and Biblical references were familiar as household words.

Glen not merely could correct a misquotation, but she did. She swooped down on an error like an eagle on its prey, and she was

able further to prove the strength of her position, not by any reference to Cruden, but by producing straightway chapter and verse. Small marvel she engendered a fine feeling of hatred towards herself! If she could have induced 'the family' to say in so many words they disliked her cordially, she would have felt perfectly happy, and perhaps relaxed some of those acts of annoyance in which she was becoming an adept. But no, they would not quarrel with her; they stated plainly it took two to make a quarrel, and they were determined not to quarrel with her—a remark Glen felt to be maddening, since a sensation of utter helplessness must supervene when you find, if you ask a man to walk out of the front door, that he immediately walks in at the back, smiling as if nothing had happened.

Between her husband's brother-in-law, as Mrs. Logan-Lacere always carefully defined the relationship, and herself, she had managed to establish at one time an open feud. If they met, their conversation was one of the most distant; if they wrote, their notes were of the coldest; and their epistolary mode of addressing each other was beautifully dignified

and formal. Glen had, opportunity offering, undertaken to teach Mr. Lacere what was due to her in the triple character of wife, author, and Irishwoman; and as the gentleman in question did not think much of her in any capacity, he naturally resented the instruction, which was perhaps not very courteously conveyed.

Glen carried her point, however, in so far that he declined to visit the house over which she was nominally mistress; but this victory proved, after all, to be a barren one. Her husband would not make her quarrels his; so far as his relations were concerned, he was in the matter of fighting a very Quaker. He thought his wife wrong, and he told her so as decidedly as the extreme gentleness of his disposition permitted him to say anything disagreeable; while to make up for her shortcomings he showed greater kindness than ever to his brother-in-law, and showered on him those favours which Glen knew would keep them poor for the whole of their lives.

In comparison to the drain Mr. Lacere was upon the good business which ought to have prospered, the Misses Lacere could only

be regarded as light and agreeable encumbrances ; while the faith with which Mr. Logan-Lacere continued to believe in his kinsman's rotten ventures, savoured not merely of infatuation, but folly.

There were not wanting those who warned Glen of what the result must prove. If advice could have saved the ship of their fortunes, it would have never gone down ; but Glen was not in command, and resolutely refusing to believe the cry of ' breakers ahead,' her husband sailed calmly onwards to destruction.

He had a good business ; but where is the struggling business which does not require careful nursing ? what trade could have borne the daily drain demanded by two families and a speculative brother-in-law ? Twice already in Glen's married experience had Mr. Philip Lacere been compelled to meet his creditors, and on each occasion her husband was ' let in ' for an amount which caused wise people to express a not unreasonable astonishment.

During these periods of bitter trial and anxiety, the husband and wife came very near each other ; and perhaps Glen was never happier than in those days when doing her

poor best to help a sadly overweighted man. She could not do very much, for it took her three hours to add up correctly a column of figures, while her knowledge of arithmetic was of the crudest description ; she could somehow work out a sum, but she utterly failed to explain how she did it. Not much of a help certainly—but she could take one trouble off his hands ; she could write his letters, she could get through a mass of correspondence that might well have appalled a man : and though occasionally Mr. Logan-Lacere received irritable epistles urging him to instruct his clerk to write legibly, still, considering Glen's wretched caligraphy, there were very few complaints, which caused her husband to consider that there must be scattered throughout the country a much larger number of persons capable of deciphering hieroglyphics than he had imagined.

Glen did not care how heartily her husband laughed at her. She was only too delighted to know that he had the keenest sense of humour, and that spite of all his anxieties and troubles he could make merry over some trifle which tickled his fancy or excited his risibility.

He came in contact with so many odd people, he encountered so many strange incidents, that now, when at last he found an intelligent and appreciative auditor, his over-taxed mind sought relief in speaking of things no other human being belonging to him could have understood. Often late in the afternoon Glen repaired to his office, which he had removed from Sise to Creed Lane ; and while her husband was busy with journal and ledger and cash book, steadily worked her way through piles of unanswered letters. Bit by bit she had learned enough of his business to know what to say without troubling him on the subject ; and then as they walked home together through the silent streets they laughed over the events of the day—though God knows both their hearts were often heavy and anxious enough. As a wife, Glen was greatly improved. She had laid Edward Beattie's advice to heart in many ways : she did not now cry over the irremediable ; she did not sit and brood about troubles she was powerless to alter. Gradually she had formed a small but pleasant circle of acquaintances who made home cheerful for her husband, and but for the

eternal drag and drain of money, which could not be got in, and money which had very surely to be paid, Logan-Lacere might have been accounted a very happy man. At all events he *was* a happy man. His was not the temper which goes out to meet trouble half-way—no day's work was too long for him—no toil too hard; and, as Ned Beattie said, he adored his wife.

About this period of her life all matters were going pretty well with Glen, except pecuniary. She felt the shoe pinch very often; literature had not, so far, proved a gold mine to her. When she finished 'Due East,' for the first and only time in her life she wrote a preface with which she proposed to enrich that work; but unhappily it never saw the light. In it she stated her determination to retire from the field, since she had found authorship was the only profession in which a labourer was not considered worthy of his hire. She went into figures, a most unwonted mental exercise for her, and stated that in so many years she had only made so much money; from which amount the cost of pens, ink, paper, postage (and she might have added

shoe-leather) ought to be deducted. She proceeded also to draw comparisons between the literary and other professions, and wound up with a general sort of commination of an unappreciative world. As has been said, however, this expression of opinions and feelings was never printed, for the sufficient reason that Mr. Vassett, when she sent him her manuscript, intimated she might reasonably reckon upon receiving a hundred and fifty pounds for this novel. A hundred and fifty pounds seemed a great deal of money to Glenarva, till she found how very short a way that amount went ; but her soul revived within her when the reviewers expressed themselves in terms of such almost unanimous approval that Mr. Vassett said if she carefully thought out another work he would give her two hundred and fifty pounds, and if the book went well would deal with her as liberally as possible.

So far as authorship was concerned, Mrs. Lacere, since she became a successful author, had become the slowest of slow writers ; further, she got into the habit of doing her work by fits and starts ; weeks and weeks

elapsed without a single line being added to the novel ; she allowed every social, domestic, and business matter to take precedence of her own legitimate employment.

To some extent all this arose from the want of ready money, which caused her to spend her strength in effecting petty economies instead of concentrating her energies on the exercise of her profession ; but the source of the evil lay deeper than this. Fame had been so long deferred, she wearied of the struggle before she touched the prize. The author of '*Æmelia Wyndham*' has given to the world an excellent piece of advice, namely, 'to beware of the faults of one's own family.' If she had added the caution to 'beware of the faults of one's own nation,' the additional warning would not have been misplaced. The hatred of monotony—the detestation of waiting till the corn ripens—the impatience of watching the slow progress of fruition—the belief that the grapes which cannot be gathered at once will never be worth eating, which are all integral parts of the warp and woof of that strange web the Irish tempera-

ment, were at the bottom of Glen's lack of systematic industry.

The opinion of those days also militated against the rapid production of books of any sort. A novel in two years was thought the proper course of procedure ; that a time should ever come when a popular author could find a market and an audience for a work of fiction every six months, was an idea which never entered into the mind of man at that period of the world's history to conceive. The insatiable cry for something new, which can now only be gratified by the publication of the veriest trash, had not then arisen. Books brought out in the spring were still being read in the autumn ; the novels even of a previous year were asked for at the libraries—in effect, publishers and authors and readers were going on much as they had been doing for a quarter of a century previously, and nobody dreamt a literary revolution was at hand—during the course of which the biggest houses in the trade would come to grief, and great firms as well as mushroom adventurers fall together in one general crash.

It was about the time Mr. Vassett proposed

those liberal terms named for Glen's third novel—for she now eschewed all mention of her early failures, and dated her career from the publication of 'Ashtree Manor'—that Mr. Philip Lacere, having for the second time passed through the insolvent court without paying anyone sixpence, thought he ought to embrace this favourable opportunity of again entering into the state of holy matrimony. What had ever happened before to the Misses Lacere in comparison to this? They did not believe it; for a long time they would not believe it—they stood out against conviction till further doubt became impossible—they expected some miracle to intervene to prevent this slight to their darling Claudine's memory—they would have prayed for fire from heaven, or the sun to stand still, or the stars to drop from the firmament, if they had felt in a mental condition to pray for anything—they refused to call on the lady, and declined to allow her to be brought to their house—they were most indignant because Mrs. Logan-Lacere paid a visit to the woman happy enough to have won the approval of the pensive and soft-spoken widower, and felt

more angry still when poor Claudine's own brother allowed her to be invited to dinner, and said plainly he did not see why his brother-in-law shouldn't marry again if he wished to do so.

It was dreadful. Glen had been bad enough, but Glen was nothing to this. They fought the question as long as fight was possible, and then the moment the marriage became an accomplished fact they all turned round and formed an alliance with the new wife, offensive and defensive, against Mrs. Logan-Lacere, whom they spoke of to her face as the 'Commander-in-Chief.'

But it did not then signify to Mrs. Logan-Lacere what they called her. The last failure of her husband's brother-in-law had, she fondly hoped, wrought such ruin that no opportunity would again be afforded that ingenious gentleman of entangling their affairs with his own. Mr. Logan-Lacere professed, and probably believed, his eyes were at length opened to the perilous consequences of going surety for his relative, getting his bills discounted, and otherwise assisting a man who preferred the road to destruction to all other thoroughfares. When

he spoke to Glen about 'stopping,' he was very much in earnest : he did not see, he said, how in the world he was to go on ; still, it was a great pity, because with the trade he had worked up he surely could pull through if time were given in which to recover from the losses he had sustained.

Long and anxious were the discussions between husband and wife. If he stopped, Glen did not exactly see how the domestic pot was to be kept boiling—so long as fuel had also to be provided for the due boiling of the Misses Laceres's pot, which would, she knew, have to be kept filled as of yore. It was a curious thing, that in this extremity it never occurred either to Glen or Mr. Logan-Lacere that the ladies of his family might with advantage try whether they could not contribute something towards their own support. It was an idea which would have met with a prompt negative from the Misses Lacere, who, if they believed themselves incompetent in no other particular, were beautifully decided that it was quite impossible for them to earn any money. Long previously, Glen, by dint of diligent research, had discovered the portraits on ivory were

mere copies touched up by the hand of some forgotten drawing-master, and her own ears told her the songs so belauded lacked the great merit of originality. She knew, if nobody else did, that not one of the family was clever except her husband, and that all these hangers-on lacked the will to exert themselves in any common useful way to earn their bread; but she did not mean to trouble herself on that score.

If only her husband would sever all business connection with his brother-in-law, she believed they might still 'win through;' keep their pretty cottage—their lovely garden—their furniture which had been collected so slowly—and the good business which promised an ever-increasing return. Mr. Logan-Lacere was vexed with his brother-in-law, and fully determined that plausible individual should never compromise him again; he decided their intercourse should be confined to the home-circle, and not be permitted to encroach on the precincts sacred to business; a hollow peace was patched up between Glen and her particular aversion, and her husband devoted his attention to considering how that terrible

impending evil of bankruptcy might be averted.

He had but one important creditor—the firm for whose specialities he was working up the trade he believed, and rightly, had an enormous future before it. If this firm gave him time, he thought he could retrieve his position; at all events, before taking any decisive step he determined to refer the matter to those most interested in his success or failure. It is not often that the right course seems the pleasantest, but in this case duty and inclination appeared to clasp hands, and Mr. Logan-Lacere put the position before his principals. There can be no question, humanly speaking, it was the worst day's work he ever did for himself in his life. When a man feels he has got to the end of his tether, his wisest policy is to break it, and start at once in the direction of new pastures. There are matters one human being is mad to refer to the judgment of any other human being. Mr. Logan-Lacere had spent time, money, health, industry, energy, in solidly laying the foundations of a business he hoped would eventually recompense him for his toil and trouble. He had

advertised freely and judiciously—his advertisements and circulars, the result of much thought, attracted attention and eventually inspired belief. Except on the subject of quack medicines, the British public is notoriously difficult to persuade; and taking this idiosyncrasy as the basis of her theme, Glen in one happy moment of unamiable inspiration produced a little pamphlet, which, given away by thousands, caused such a division in families as pamphlet probably never did before. Husband ranged himself against wife; sisters refused belief in brothers; servants gave notice; and masters loudly declared their intention of being paramount in their own houses. In omnibuses the oldest travelling-companions fell foul of each other, some declaring the pamphlet to be ‘a mere bundle of lies.’

When Glen wrote it, which she did more out of despair and annoyance than from actual hope of effecting any good, she had not the slightest idea of creating such a clamour. Never one of her books was read, criticized, praised, and pooh-poohed like that three-page bill. Some persons regarded it as a personal

insult; but at any rate the arrow found its mark.

‘Who the deuce is Lely?’ men who never had read, and never were likely to read a novel, inquired.

‘Some impudent scoundrel!’ ‘A most pestilent ruffian,’ old-fashioned gentlemen, well accounted of in the City, with noses artistically tinted with sound port, would indignantly reply. Be sure they were not spared in the Logan-Lacere manifesto, copies of which at last came to be eagerly asked for, and were finally only given away as a favour.

Well, all this had been done for the benefit of the speciality manufactured by the provincial firm to whom a considerable amount was owing.

They had never imagined such a trade could have been worked up, and they were steadily purposed that when it suited their own convenience they would step into Mr. Logan-Lacere’s shoes and tell him calmly to walk barefoot out of the business he himself had made. They knew perfectly well he was a poor man, also that he was an over-

weighted man, and that when once they established a London house he would not have a ghost of a chance against their capital and their facilities of production. But they kept their intention within their own heart—they professed a desire to act most liberally towards Mr. Logan-Lacere, and accordingly the iron pot and the earthenware continued to keep company apparently on the best terms possible.

At the time Glen's husband felt he could not go on, there was nothing more certain than that it would have proved especially inconvenient for the great firm to let the London business stop, or take it over; and accordingly when the state of the case was laid before them, they professed their willingness to enter into an arrangement which on the face of it seemed actually generous. Cash was to be paid at certain short intervals for all goods supplied, but the payment of the old indebtedness was to be thrown over a period extending beyond two years.

Without another liability, perfectly unencumbered as regarded domestic expenses beyond his own household, the man might

have fulfilled the conditions imposed ; but as matters stood, he and Glen saw the months glide away without the slightest apparent chance of being able to pay anything off the arrears. The business was still not strong enough to stand alone.

If advertising ceased, trade fell off—yet advertising was an expense which properly ought only to have been taken out of a large capital, and the repayment thrown over many successful years. How her husband worked perhaps no human being but Glen ever knew. He started for his office at seven, and rarely got home before ten. Often Glen bore him company in those long evening vigils after office hours were over. If ‘Elia’s’ real works were, as he said, to be found on the shelves of a certain great building, now demolished, in Leadenhall Street, so the bulk of Mrs. Logan-Lacere’s manuscripts commencing ‘Sir,’ and ending ‘Your obedient Servant,’ were at that time scattered over all lands. She wrote acres of letters—unwitting the seed she planted was destined to be reaped by others—that for herself and husband there should ripen no harvest but disappointment !

She had commenced her new book before the arrangement mentioned was come to, and went on writing by fits and starts till she completed rather more than two-thirds of the novel. Mr. Vassett unhappily was not pressing her to complete it. He evinced no undue anxiety to receive the conclusion—quite the contrary. Several things had of late occurred to damp the ardour of a publisher in his most enterprising days somewhat prone to over-caution.

Had Mr. Pierson been still in Craven Street the encouraging statement he would certainly have made, that ‘though the trade seemed going to the —— he felt no doubt it would come right in the end,’ might have helped to restore Mr. Vassett’s confidence; but Mr. Pierson was not in Craven Street. He had ‘departed to that bourne,’ as Mat Donagh would have said, ‘from whence no traveller’ (even a publisher’s reader or advertisement canvasser) ‘returns.’

He had gone, not in a brisk and business-like sort of way, but lingeringly, as though loth to leave the greasy London pavements and the familiar fogs and the accustomed

small-talk—gone after evoking a great deal of sympathy from, and costing a large sum of money to, Mr. Vassett, who took his reader's death seriously to heart—so seriously indeed that he never even tried to replace his loss. The 'circumstance,' as Mr. Vassett delicately styled Mr. Pierson's reluctant step from this world to the next, undoubtedly preyed on the publisher's mind. When for years one has been accustomed to a familiar voice, the daily routine seems silent and lonely without it.

The long, dreary illness—the dragging journey from life to death—the pinched features—the yellow skin—the wasted hands—the weak accents of the man he had kept so long out of the workhouse, undoubtedly left an impression on Mr. Vassett's mind too deep for words.

'You'll miss me, Vassett, more than you think,' said Mr. Pierson one afternoon in the mournful winter twilight. That was the last sentence Mr. Vassett ever heard him speak, for it was uttered after the accustomed parting. Next morning it was only that which had been Pierson, Mr. Vassett beheld fantastically

arrayed, lying in a shell of the publisher's providing, the while a weeping widow and several children took perfectly practical views of the 'sad event,' and wondered what the dead man's friend would do for them.

Mr. Vassett did a great deal—he was practical, but generous; if he did not assist Mrs. Pierson to the extent that lady perhaps anticipated, she yet found him in her time of need more liberal than she had the slightest reason to expect. He paid the doctor and the funeral expenses (during the illness his purse was always open); he provided plain though decent mourning; he wrote a cheque for a moderate sum to enable the widow to get her head above water again; and then he figuratively shook hands with the Pierson connection and cut their acquaintance.

In consequence they said many hard things of the Craven Street publisher which were extremely ungrateful, and vexed the soul of that kind-hearted man greatly when repeated to him, as they were duly and truly by some of his various excellent friends.

On the top of Pierson's death came many (and sad) changes in the literary world. For

example—the gradual extinction of all small libraries, the birth of monopolies, the growth of great enterprises in connection with railway extension; and last, but by no means least, the sudden upspringing of the Burleigh Street house. Trade is a doctor which needs no minute or second hand in its watch to feel the public pulse. One day when Mr. Vassett went out to subscribe a book, he knew some awful change was impending. At Mudie's, he met that engaging young gentleman, Mr. Lance Felton. As a rich old dowager, with Heaven only knows how many quarterings, would avoid an introduction to, say, an ex-Lady Mayoress, so Mr. Vassett desired to decline the acquaintance of the irrepressible Lance; but Lance refused to be repulsed. That dreadful Bohemian, risen from the people, who, as Mr. Vassett knew, owed even his ability to read and write to the (mistaken) kindness of the Dawton family, sidled up to him, and with a terrible impudence, after presenting his own unattractive person by name to the eminently respectable and old-established publisher of Craven Street, showed him the subscription list of a work

Mr. Vassett had declined to purchase, which turned the elder man green with envy.

‘I candidly confess I don’t know how you manage,’ said Mr. Vassett, who, though mortified, was too wise and truthful to deny facts when thrust in his very face.

‘Ah!’ answered Lance sententially, ‘there are more ways of killing a dog than hanging him,’ which utterance, though undoubtedly true, did not much help Mr. Vassett in his endeavour to get the libraries up to the point he wanted to reach in his own subscription lists.

That afternoon a particularly nice turkey, stuffed, boiled, and served with celery sauce, greeted Mr. Vassett’s return to Craven Street. An apple-tart and custard followed the turkey. Stilton cheese supervened; and then he was finally left to himself and his own reflections, with some sound Madeira which a friend had sent him, and the usual meagre and mortified-looking dessert. To not one of the items composing that dinner could Mr. Vassett, as a rule, be considered indifferent; but on the day in question he sent the turkey down almost untasted, refused to cut into the apple-

tart, said he wanted no cheese, and declining Madeira, rang the bell for hot water, and mixed himself a tumbler of punch.

That apparently was the beginning of his illness, one which for years chronically affected every plan and purpose of his life. Truth is, he had arrived at an age when if a man takes little exercise in London, and goes into the country not at all, and has his meals regularly and the means to provide them without undue anxiety as to the how and the wherewithal, dyspepsia in some one of its many forms is pretty sure to fasten upon him. This proved the case with Mr. Vassett—to quote his own phrase, his ‘nerves were not what they used to be,’ his appetite became capricious, he could not tell ‘what the deuce ailed his stomach,’ and whenever he called upon his head to make an effort, his head flatly refused to do anything of the sort.

Mr. Vassett had never been famous for reading manuscripts, and now he simply declined to read them at all. He felt no desire to enter into competition with men like Felton and Laplash. His business was rapidly becoming distasteful to him. He began to turn his

mind to stocks and shares and good investments in freehold land and ground-rents, rather than to the immature works of rising genius. If a man takes to rather disliking authors, it is not long before he begins to hate them. There is nothing particularly attractive about the appearance of a manuscript, say three volumes long. Mr. Vassett found manuscripts so extremely unattractive that he at last said to himself:

‘Confound it, why should I peddle away my time reading all this stuff? I can put both time and money to much better use.’

This was the precise state of mind he had arrived at when, one dreary day towards the end of a peculiarly unpleasant November, Glen walked westward, meaning to confer with him on the subject of her new novel.

In the matter of advances Mr. Vassett had been very liberal; whenever Glen required a few pounds those pounds had been forthcoming. But now she not merely wanted a good deal of money, but also some positive assurance as to the time when, if she finished her novel immediately, she might expect it to appear. In her own domestic province a dead-

lock seemed imminent. She had never been one of those persons who could make a single sovereign do the work of two. So far as she was concerned, nothing seemed easier than to forego any luxury or even necessary—but the expenses of a house cease not by day or night. The indebtedness of the most moderate establishment, like the grass, grows in the dark, and as Glen did not mean to trouble her husband about such details, she felt, as she expressed the matter to herself, it was ‘time to do something.’

Probably on the face of this earth there never existed a woman who so cordially detested asking for money as Glenarva ; and it was for this very reason she always seemed to Mr. Vassett to be needing it. She could not bring herself to name a sufficient sum at once, and so the publisher fell into the habit of thinking, ‘I wonder what Mrs. Lacere can do with all the money she has from me,’ forgetting how small an amount the ‘all’ came to at the end of the year.

However, on this especial afternoon, Glen, as she walked westward, decided that she would say out all that she felt and wanted.

She chalked out the plan of her intended campaign—she determined to put her affairs on some tangible footing—she would ask Mr. Vassett whether he thought he could publish one novel a year from her pen ; in which case she meant to give an amount of time and attention to authorship she had never before attempted.

She considered what she would say ; she felt very strong in this new determination. If, for example, she could make enough to pay for household expenses—take rent, taxes, tradesmen's bills, servants' wages off her husband's shoulders—what a comfort it would prove. She meant to be confidential with Mr. Vassett. He had known her so long, he had always treated her so kindly, he could not think it strange if she did lay bare before him some of her pecuniary anxieties. Glen had quite made up her mind ; she would get affairs put upon a more regular and business footing—she would hurry on her work—she would begin to regard authorship really as a profession—she would not for the future attend to her writing last, and to every other little trumpery affair first. She longed for mental rest ; to be de-

livered from the thralldom of considering half-crowns and sixpences. 'Yes, Mr. Vassett was at home,' Muggins told her; Muggins was also good enough to intimate she might seek the publisher in his office.

'He's not engaged,' said Muggins; to whom the author of 'Due East' and 'Ashtree Manor' did not appear in the slightest degree a more important person than the girl who used to bring her manuscripts in Mr. Pierson's time in order to have them rejected.

'There's nobody with him,' added Muggins, thinking Mrs. Lacere had not quite grasped his meaning. Truth was, Glen's courage was already oozing out at her fingers' ends. Her well-arranged sentences seemed to be getting a little confused; nevertheless, at Mr. Muggins's last intimation, which was conveyed in a somewhat querulous tone, she took her 'heart in her hand' and entered Mr. Vassett's private office.

An hour later she emerged from it, having said no single word she intended to utter. If she had spoken out that afternoon, the end of her Struggle for Fame might have been very different; but then that simply means that

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another than Glenarva must have stood in her shoes, and talked with another tongue and been altogether another person from the woman Glenarva was or ever grew to be.

She lacked a quality.

So did her husband.

Lacking it, neither of them ever achieved success. Lacking it, the man was never born nor the woman ever breathed capable of making any considerable amount of money.

At all events, finding Mr. Vassett indisposed to discuss business, in a mood indeed to discuss any other subject in preference to business, Glen sat on, listening to his utterances dismayed. She had not courage to ask for money, and inquire when her book would be published if she finished it at once, or even to say, ‘Do you like it?’

The light of the winter day waned—she felt she could stay no longer—she desired to petition for even ten pounds, but she felt she could not do it. The curse of Glen’s life was on her in full force that afternoon. She could not bear asking for money. Had her husband, who was unable by any means possible to give her a fixed allowance, failed continually to

say, 'My dear, I am sure you cannot have sixpence in the world,' Glen could not have troubled him even for a shilling.

Pity the contrast between his wife and the Misses Lacere never struck the man in those days ! They certainly wanted nothing which could be had for the begging !

'Rather than go away empty,' sighed Glen, 'they would strip the garden ;' and the remark was true. Locusts never left a land barer than the women who, not loving 'dear Mordaunt's wife,' still called her 'darling Glen' and 'our wonderful sister.'

Sick at heart and worn and weary, 'our wonderful sister' said good-bye to Mr. Vassett, and passed out into Craven Street. She did not turn in the direction of the Strand ; instead, she walked slowly to the bottom of the street. In her soul she felt she was a very coward, and that in the battle of life she never should do much good. She would have made a fine private, if only some different spirit than herself had led. Take comfort, ladies, however ; after all, there are not many among you so constituted. Glen was only a poor simpleton, spite her occasional glib tongue,

and poor power of slowly producing a decent book, and gift of plodding. She divined then what she clearly understood afterwards, that there was not much in her; certainly not enough to do a great deal of good for herself or anyone else.

She walked to the bottom of Craven Street, and stood there for a time, looking at the Thames and reviewing her position. At the time, if Mr. Vassett had only known how horribly short of money she was, he would have written out a cheque at once. Then she paced slowly up the street again, and began to make her way eastward *viâ* the Adelphi. She had got to Adam Street before she exactly knew what was in her mind; then she stood quite still. Something was urging her on at the moment she never afterwards understood—despair, perhaps.

‘I can do nothing with this book,’ she thought; ‘but as regards the next, I will try to get something more decided.’ And so, with that indifference to externals and dress, the darkening twilight, and what may be called the feeble instinct of a feeble sex, which characterized most of her proceedings, Glen,

totally unarmed for conquest, turned her weary steps in the direction of Burleigh Street. It was then Lance said :

‘God bless me ! I have done everything but advertise for you in the *Times* ;’ and Glen answered :

‘Have you ?’ the while she felt strongly she did not like Mr. Felton or Mr. Laplash, or the appearance of the place generally.

‘Now, what have you got ?’ asked Lance, when he had despatched Noll to the post-office.

Glen replied she had nothing. Mr. Vassett was to publish her next book. No—it wasn’t finished ; two volumes were done. But next year, perhaps——

‘Next year ? Nonsense !’ interrupted Lance. ‘Now, look here — what’s your name ?’ He had been critically examining the *personnel* of the successful author, and felt sure *she* was no swell—no lace-and-velvet—no diamond-and-ruby young woman.

‘Mrs. Logan-Lacere,’ answered Glen, unwitting that the name stank in Mr. Felton’s nostrils.

‘*Logan-Lacere* !’ he repeated in amazement.

‘God bless me!’ he exclaimed for the second time in their short interview, though, indeed, there was nothing in that establishment less believed in than the Almighty. ‘How the —— did he get hold of you? Oh, I beg your pardon,’ he hurriedly added, as she made an almost involuntary movement of disapproval and departure; ‘I only meant it seemed so strange. I have been hunting the world over for you, and you were just here to my hand all the while. Besides, you know, we thought you were a man—and that book of yours, “Due East”—by Jove! I read it through three times! And I used to know your husband; but that was long before your time, no doubt. I suppose you never heard him speak of me?’

‘Oh yes, I have,’ answered Glen promptly; ‘since you began to publish, that is, I have often heard him speak of how clever you were, and of how hard you read at the British Museum.’

‘Bravo!’ thought Lance, looking straight in ‘Ashtree Manor’s’ face, which bore the most truthful expression; as it might well, since, indeed, that was nearly all she had

heard her husband say on the Felton question. 'Come, Mordaunt, you are not half such a sneak as I thought you ; the minute a fellow gets on a suit of new clothes you don't want to tear them off his back.'

'And I knew his brother, too,' added Mr. Felton aloud.

'His brother-in-law,' amended Glen ; and in a minute the publisher, to use his own expression, 'knew how the land lay *there*.'

'I sent you a message by him,' Mr. Felton said tentatively ; 'but I suppose he forgot to deliver it.'

'No,' answered Glen, and she flushed a little. 'He delivered it to my husband, and my husband told me.'

'Then why the deuce—excuse my swearing, but it's enough to make anybody swear—why didn't you come to me months ago ?'

Glen looked at Mr. Felton, then glanced round the office, then let her eyes rest for a moment on Mr. Laplash ere she answered. In her heart she was wondering why she had come there then ; but as it would have been scarcely courteous to say so, she contented herself with remarking Mr. Vassett had made her

name, and she did not care to take her books elsewhere.

‘Oh, that sort of thing is all nonsense,’ retorted Lance; ‘business is business, and sentiment is quite out of place in an office. I am very sure Vassett never gave you anything like the sum I am willing to pay.’

Glen answered she was very well satisfied with the prices Mr. Vassett paid. She was thinking as she spoke of what she had heard pass between her husband and brother-in-law on the subject of Mr. Felton’s worldly position.

‘He is a clever fellow,’ remarked the first; ‘but unless he has some one with a large capital at his back, I do not see how he can stand his ground.’

‘Who would have anything to do with him?’ returned the other. ‘He has no capital except impudence.’

About Mr. Felton himself, or his place of business, or his partner, there was certainly nothing to suggest the idea of money; and perhaps for this reason Mrs. Lacere did not rise to the bait, as the publisher expected.

‘Well,’ he exclaimed, ‘I have often heard of the difference between authors and their

books, but the difference between you and your books is something almost incredible. I said to myself when I read "Ashtree Manor," "This is written by some fellow who has knocked about the world and knows a thing or two, a sharp hand at a bargain ; it wouldn't be easy to take him in." And now it turns out the author is a woman, who talks more foolishly than I ever heard any woman, even my own wife, talk before, and who does not seem to have enough spirit to say "Bo" to a goose.'

Glen laughed out. It is unnecessary to say she did not entirely recognise the truth of Mr. Felton's unflattering portrait, but it amused her all the more perhaps for that very reason.

' 'Come,' cried Lance, 'that's better. And now, to waste no more time—let's get to business. I'll give you eight hundred pounds for your novel. Will you take it? If you won't, what will you take?'

Eight hundred pounds—good heavens! At the words Glen's head seemed to turn round. Eight hundred pounds! Why, the mines of Golconda could yield no more! But she did not feel the whole affair real; she thought she

must be dreaming, and that she would waken presently to the reality of a life which lacked many necessities and possessed no solitary superfluity.

‘I am beginning to imagine you must be dumb, Mrs. Lacere,’ said Mr. Felton impatiently.

He was fast working himself up into a rage. He thought she was not satisfied with his offer, and he knew Mr. Laplash was most dissatisfied. From his position against the wall that gentleman had been making a series of signs which were perfectly intelligible to Lance, and not wholly mysterious to Glen herself, who, in answer to the publisher’s last observation, said :

‘I beg your pardon ; I was considering. The book I am writing now is sold to Mr. Vassett, but I shall be very glad indeed to make an arrangement with you for my next novel. I must not intrude on your time longer now. It will be better for me to call upon you again in the spring ;’ and Glen was calmly rising to depart when Mr. Felton interposed.

‘Don’t go,’ he exclaimed. ‘Now I have

got you I mean to keep you. I have had trouble enough with you, and intend to advertise you next week in my list.'

'But what are you going to advertise?' inquired Mrs. Lacere, with some natural astonishment.

'The book Vassett has got.'

'That is quite impossible,' said Glen.

'What is impossible? All you have to do is, go to Vassett and get to know the sum he wants for his bargain.'

'I am sure Mr. Vassett would not stand in my way, but I could not ask him to release me from my engagement.'

'Why couldn't you? Gracious goodness, would anybody believe you wrote your own books? The thing is simple as A B C. In the first place, where is the manuscript?'

'At Craven Street.'

'Well then, you run along to Craven Street and get the first volume, and bring it here. You tell Vassett you can sell it for far more money than he'll ever give you; and just say in so many plain words—"How much will you take to cancel our agreement?"'

It is said that all the events of a lifetime

have been known to pass through the mind of a drowning man—that in one supreme moment the whole panorama of existence, from boyhood to age, has flashed across his mental sight; and it certainly is true that as Mr. Felton spoke, all the many kindly words Mr. Vassett had uttered, all the hopes and fears and despair and rejoicing experienced in the familiar office, recurred to Glenarva's memory, and urged her to refuse this new publisher's suggestion. And yet the money! She did not believe he would or could ever pay her such a sum. Nevertheless, the very dream seemed for the time being pleasant; and besides, she thought Mr. Vassett really did not want her book, or to be troubled any more with her. There were two volumes completed, and not a definite word yet said about commencing to print.

'If I go to Mr. Vasset——' she began slowly.

'Of course you will go; that is quite settled,' interrupted Lance, with a decision really refreshing.

'I shall want some money,' proceeded Glen; 'I owe him money.'

‘Very well; you can have whatever you require.’

‘And I should like some for myself,’ she added desperately.

‘All right; you have only to say what you need. Now go and get the manuscript; we shall soon be closing here.’

‘Oh, I could not possibly go back to Craven Street this evening; I have only just come from there. Mr. Vassett would think I must have had some idea of this kind while I was in his office, and——’

‘Look here,’ exclaimed Lance; ‘you’ll drive me mad. Kelly—I say, Kelly, step this way a minute, will you? Now listen to the position, and as a man of sense and experience give this lady a word of advice.’ And then, almost without drawing his breath, Mr. Felton explained how matters stood, and asked if Mrs. Lacere ought not to go that hour, that instant, and rescue her manuscript from the Parliamentary train, as he called Mr. Vassett, and ‘shove it into the Burleigh Street express.’

Glen had glanced at Mr. Kelly as he entered, and remembered that they had met before, but she made no sign of recognition.

She wanted to hear what he had to say. Perhaps she was longing to be urged to adopt a course she knew perfectly well she should afterwards repent. She always did repent every course she adopted, so after all it seemed to signify little which road she selected to travel.

‘What is your opinion?’ repeated Mr. Felton, addressing Mr. Kelly, who, hat in hand, stood within the doorway, a contrast to Mr. Laplash, who, with his hat on, leaned against the wall, and Noll, who, similarly covered, hovered just outside.

‘It all depends,’ answered Mr. Kelly; and as he spoke, standing where the light of the gas fell full upon him, Glen could but consider how greatly the years had improved him. What! was this the *gauche* fellow-traveller in the slow and never-to-be-forgotten journey to London?—this the man who had been introduced to Lady Hilda’s notice as the clever actor in ‘How’s Maria?’ Though the same, he was altogether different. Glen had heard something about his marriage from Mr. Vassett, and could not deny matrimony had produced a wonderfully beneficial effect on his outward

appearance. 'It all depends,' he said, 'on whether it is of importance to Mrs. Lacere to receive the additional sum you offer.'

'I imagine there is not much doubt about that,' answered Mr. Felton, quite unconscious that his remark could scarcely be considered agreeable.

For a second Glen only gave consent by silence ; at last she said, straightforwardly, 'Mr. Felton is quite right. Money is of importance to me.'

'Then I think you would do wisely to go and talk matters over with Mr. Vassett,' decided Barney.

The successful author took one reluctant step towards the door, while Lance cried out, 'All I want her to do is to get her manuscript. I entreat of you to go at once. Do, for heaven's sake, put a little of the spirit into yourself you have put into your books. If I could find an old shoe I'd throw it after you, but everything is so confoundedly new here.'

'I am going,' said Glen calmly ; 'but remember, I don't like it ;' and, with a slight bow to Mr. Kelly, she went through the outer office and passed into the street.

‘Did you ever see such a duffer?’ was Mr. Felton’s flattering criticism, the moment she disappeared.

‘Do you think she is the author?’ asked Mr. Kelly.

‘Certain sure. Now I wonder how long she’ll stay discussing the matter with Vassett?’

He need not have troubled himself on that point. Muggins was closing the offices as she got there, and it was almost in the dark she held her brief interview with Mr. Vassett. He said he would not stand in her way—perhaps for the reason that it never occurred to him she knew anything of Felton or Laplash, or even the benignant Noll. Nobody was aware who the author of ‘Ashtree Manor’ might be, and he did not feel inclined to go back into his own office and hold another lengthy conversation with her.

He gave her the first volume of the new book, and when she said she would see him the next day, he answered, a little shortly, ‘Very well;’ then Glen bade him good-night, and the interview was over, and she was hurrying through the darkness back to Burleigh Street, having taken the first step along a road which

led her afterwards into the blackness of a night that seemed at one time without even one star to lighten its terrible gloom.

‘So you have come back at last,’ commented her husband, as she walked into his office and passed round his desk and came and stood silently beside him. He could not bear her being out after dusk, and had passed through every possible phase of anxiety on her account. ‘And where do you think you have been?’

‘I have been selling a book,’ she answered. ‘Look!’ And she took out of her purse—which only held sixpence besides—a cheque for fifty pounds.

‘Why, where did you get this?’ he asked in utter amazement, looking only at the amount and not at the signature.

‘And there is seven hundred and fifty more to follow some time,’ proceeded Glen, without the slightest elation of tone or manner.

Her husband looked at her. He did not know whether she was in earnest or not, or if she had suddenly taken leave of her senses.

She returned his look very steadily, and then made this remark, which in the often future he recalled with a vague wonder :

‘I only hope it may not turn out I have done a bad evening’s work.’

‘My dear,’ he said — ‘my dear!’ for he could not comprehend the presentiment which seemed weighing on her, and the relief to him was something simply beyond the power of expression.





CHAPTER VI.

MR. KELLY'S ADVICE.

‘**A**ND, pray, who is *Mr.* Logan-Lacere?’ It was at Mr. Kelly’s hospitable table this question happened to be put. During the course of the six months following Glen’s visit to Burleigh Street it had been asked a good many times by various persons in different places.

‘Something in the City,’ answered a gentleman seated opposite.

‘Greengrocer or millionaire?’ which of course, as was only right and proper, produced a laugh at the expense of the City.

‘I am sure he is not a greengrocer, and I do not think he is a millionaire,’ interposed Mr.

Kelly ; while at the other end of the table a little running fire was going on of 'Only to think, after all, of those books being written by a lady ;' 'I wonder what she is like ;' 'Must be a very masculine sort of person, I should think ;' 'It is perfectly dreadful the way she speaks of her sex ;' 'The general opinion is, her husband writes her books ; I have heard *he* is very nice ;' 'Really ! do you know what he is ?' and then everyone paused for a moment to listen, as a man very like a sharp, cross terrier—whom, had he been a dog, one would have instantly set down as a 'good ratter,' with a rimless glass well screwed in his right eye—said in the tone of one having authority, 'I can tell you all about Mr. Logan-Lacere.'

'Why, you don't mean to say you ever were in the City !' observed the gentleman who had made the hit about greengrocer or millionaire.

'Wasn't I ?—went down once among the hosts of the Philistines, and came back sorely wounded.'

'Poor innocent !' murmured his friend.

'However, it wasn't then I knew the fortunate

husband of our distinguished author. It was in the happy days of childhood. I have the pleasantest recollections connected with the name of Mordaunt Logan-Lacere. We fought together, robbed orchards together, birds-nested, went nutting, rode by turns an old but extremely vicious pony that generally finished by throwing me into the nearest and dirtiest ditch, or what was far worse, the middle of a quickset hedge. Yes, his uncle had a jolly little place down in our part of the world, and till I went to Eton we were close friends. When I returned home the next time his uncle was dead and he gone to London; and except once, I never heard of him since till I saw in the columns of the *Times*—"Heron's Nest" (which I may remark was the name of his uncle's house), "by Mrs. B. Logan-Lacere."

'How romantic, how interesting!' sighed a middle-aged spinster sitting by his side; 'and do you know anything of her?'

'No; out of mere curiosity, for I need scarcely tell you I am not a novel-reader, I got the book from Mudie's, and the description of Heron's Nest and the country round

about is so accurate, I thought Lacere must have married some girl from the old neighbourhood; but I understand I was mistaken. She is Welsh, or Scotch, or——'

'No—Irish,' interrupted Mr. Kelly.

'We shall get at something presently,' said a portly dowager seated beside the host. 'What between Mr. Hibbs, who knows all about the husband, and Mr. Kelly, who can tell us all about the wife, it will be our own fault if we are not soon the best-informed persons in London concerning this long-vexed question.'

'I fear all I can tell you about the wife will not add greatly to your store of knowledge,' answered Barney, who had made it the rule of his married life to profess total ignorance of the existence of all ladies except those to whom his wife introduced him. 'I certainly have seen her. She came into Mr. Felton's office once when I was there.'

'Do satisfy our curiosity about her,' implored a lady who had previously expressed her conviction Mrs. Lacere 'must be the sweetest of the sweet—a delightfully melancholy and unhappy sort of creature, you know.'

‘I don’t think there is much to say about her,’ answered Mr. Kelly, who would have made the same reply had Glen been beautiful as Venus. ‘She certainly doesn’t look clever, or like a person capable of writing a successful book, but the race is not always to the swift or the battle to the strong,’ added Barney, thinking of his own unappreciated novel, which had gone the round of nearly every London publisher, and been rejected by all.

‘Judging from her books I should say they are a miserable pair,’ observed a lady, who entertained the conviction that some of Glen’s bitterest utterances had been directed against herself personally.

‘If they are I am sure it is not Lacere’s fault,’ spoke up Mr. Hibbs briskly; ‘but they are poor, I understand, so of course they must be unhappy. He was cruelly imposed upon by his step-father. He is just the sort of fellow people could not resist cheating. He has got such a lot of brains it seems an equal fight, but it is not; intellect is no match for trade “sharpness.”’

‘Depend upon it *he* writes the books,’ said the dowager, *sotto voce*, to her neighbour.

Just then, Mrs. Kelly with a gracious smile inclining her head towards the dowager, there ensued a general movement and flutter, and rustling of stiff silks, and sweep of velvets, and *frou-frou* of trailing skirts ; and since, for most of the men present, literature in any shape did not offer the slightest attraction, conversation drifted into other channels, and it was some weeks later ere Mr. Kelly, meeting Mr. Hibbs at a lawn-party, where they were both bored to death, asked him for some further particulars concerning Glen's husband.

‘ Yes, it was from the Lacere union all the misfortunes of the Logans began,’ explained Mr. Hibbs. ‘ There were two sisters co-heiresses—one died unmarried, and her portion went to some far-away relations in Durham, I think ; the other married Logan, who had a small patrimony of his own, and who, so far as birth was concerned, stood far above the Laceres. He was the great-grandfather of our friend ; so, you see, it has not taken long for the family to get to the bottom of the hill. The father was a very good, quiet sort of man, I believe, who died when his son was two

years of age—and his daughter still unborn. He left a cousin of his own, guardian and executor—a widower with a large family—a needy man, and dishonest into the bargain. The widow seems to have been a poor creature, and soon married him; and the boy, who happened to be delicate, and no doubt in the way to boot, was sent to Heron's Nest. After his uncle's death, it seems, he went back to the step-paternal roof, where he was taught to regard Lacere as his benefactor, his best friend, and so forth.

‘Actually, he was twenty-five before it came to his knowledge, quite by accident, that he had not been a pauper living on his step-father's bounty. That good gentleman had quietly appropriated every sixpence of his money, and, having died in the odour of sanctity, left his whole family to the care of the youth he had defrauded. It is a beautiful connection into which your countrywoman has married. I know a solicitor who is pretty well acquainted with the Laceres, root and branch, and his opinion is that whatever income the lady makes, or her husband earns, will be engulfed in the family quagmire.

He has lost a lot of money, I am told, through becoming surety and that sort of ridiculous thing. I believe his business is a good one, but I have reason to know he is *not* in easy circumstances.'

This was the first-fruits of Glen's visit to Burleigh Street. Never saying 'By your leave,' or 'With your leave,' Messrs. Felton and Laplash, considering the mystery concerning her had lasted long enough, advertised her name throughout the kingdom, and everyone was consequently free to discuss her husband's affairs, and both their antecedents, to speculate concerning their home-life, to repeat any story, true or false, about what they were and had been.

The charming privacy of anonymous authorship could be Glen's no longer. Thanks to Messrs. Felton and Co., she was now common property. Hitherto she had shrunk morbidly from publicity ; now she was placed well in a strong light for everyone who pleased to stare at and criticize. Mr. Vassett had stood well between her and the world. No one ever elicited a syllable of information concerning the new author from him ; but with Mr. Felton

and his partner the case was widely different, and almost to her terror, and certainly to her annoyance, Mrs. Logan-Lacere found people were talking about her by name, and that the still safe haven of a quiet life was exchanged for that wide sea of notoriety where authors make more enemies than friends—where very bad weather has often to be encountered, and where the build of the vessel, and the canvas she carries, and the flag she hoists, are far more considered and discussed than the freight with which she is laden.

Not all the solid benefits she derived from Burleigh Street ever reconciled her to Mr. Felton's place of business, which was constantly full of loungers, who called each other by their Christian names (abbreviated), who chaffed and laughed at and about nothing, the while the senior partner discoursed, generally with his hat on and his legs dangling from the counter, concerning the habits of high life and those things which it was correct, as well as those things which it was not correct to do.

Nevertheless, through a period of very hard work, Glen soon began to feel it was a golden stream down which the barque with their for-

tunes was then smoothly gliding. No shortness of money at that time ; no need to consider sixpences or shillings either, to stint in housekeeping, to pause ere buying a dress. So long as she chose to sign an agreement and take bills for the amount, she could have what she wanted in the way of money from Burleigh Street ; and the more she spent, so as to 'look as if she was well paid,' to quote Mr. Felton's own expression, the better that gentleman was pleased.

He had exactly the same feeling about his authors that some mistresses have about their servants. He wanted the writers on his list to 'cut a greater dash' than the writers on the list of any other publisher.

He desired, in fact, not merely to be a 'swell' himself, but to make 'swells' of others. He would have liked to see a string of carriages in Burleigh Street, and nothing annoyed him more about Mr. Kelly than that gentleman's persistent refusal to bring his wife's bays to help advertise the Felton and Laplash establishment, or to grace in his own person, or allow Mrs. Kelly to grace, any of the banquets to which the adventurous Lance was

in the habit of hospitably bidding all his 'great guns,' and some of his 'little guns' too, if they chanced to be favourites.

For some time Glen and her husband managed to elude these festivities, but at length it seemed to them both that to persist in this refusal would be to vex a man who seemed to mean very kindly towards them, and who, throughout the whole of their business relations, never varied in one respect—namely, his belief in Mrs. Logan-Lacere's power as a writer, and his admiration for her books.

He praised her till her very name became abhorrent to the loungers in Burleigh Street, till men longed to pull her work to pieces, and tell Mr. Felton how utterly sick and weary they felt of what he called his 'crack author.'

'Felton used to bully us about you,' a well-known essayist, with whom Glen became great friends in after-years, once laughingly told her. 'I believe we all hated you then,' he said; and Glen answered she was not in the least surprised. If it had fallen to her lot to be wise beforehand, and understand how little she was loved by the Burleigh Street fraternity, she would pro-

bably have elected at first, as she did at last, to decline meeting any of them under Mr. Felton's roof, where that excitable individual almost worked himself into a frenzy, lest each guest should not get what he liked, or be properly attended to.

Poor Lance Felton! Whatever his other faults might be, he was the soul of hospitality, and it hurt Glen to see, what he never saw himself, how little those who came to the feast thought of the giver of it—how much more ready they were to note little solecisms in social etiquette, and to remark on the ignorance evinced in the neglect of small details, than to recognise the generous desire to promote their comfort—the nervously-anxious wish that they should all feel thoroughly at home and enjoy themselves.

Yet certainly the host was irresistible; no man or woman, with the slightest sense of humour, could have helped laughing at him, and there was not much harm in that, had the laughter been all good-natured, for he laughed loud and often at himself. He was forever taking the whole company into his confidence about matters concerning which anyone else

would have maintained a pleasing reticence. He could not hold his tongue. He preferred to tell the world of his shortcomings. It was extremely funny to hear him talk about what he did not know, but extremely sad to notice the cruel sneers with which many of these utterances were greeted.

Long as Glen had been writing, this was her first experience of social life in Bohemia.

She had seen authors on their best behaviour in Mr. Vassett's office, and somewhat inclined to be a little wild in Burleigh Street, but the dinner at Mr. Felton's place down Hampton way was quite another matter. The decorous slowness and solemnity with which the evening commenced formed an extraordinary contrast to the frantic hilarity that heralded its close. Curiously enough, there were not many of the guests who knew each other except by name. A few men talked together in the drawing-room, and spoke to some of the ladies as though they had met them before, but at first it seemed impossible that from such diverse materials any pleasure could ever be extracted. The best jokes of the best joker fell utterly flat—even Lady Hilda, who was pre-

sent, failed to strike a spark of fire. The truth is, her ladyship infinitely preferred a small audience, where she could keep attention to herself exclusively. Stage asides, little snatches of conversation—such as, ‘So Jennings has gone!’ ‘Yes; saw him off.’ ‘What do you think of Carew’s comedy?’ ‘Did you read that savage review of Tomkins’s work in the *Saturday*?’—drove her to the verge of distraction. Glen had recognised her lively ladyship at once, and shrinking from too close a proximity to Hicks’s derelict, found herself at Mr. Felton’s elbow.

‘I say,’ he whispered eagerly, ‘I am going to take you in to dinner.’

‘You must not do that,’ cried Glen.

‘Why not?’

‘Because Lady Hilda——’

‘Oh——Lady Hilda!’ retorted Mr. Felton, while Glen murmured, ‘H—sh! h—sh!’ soothingly following up this hint with a series of entreaties, which in due time produced the desired result.

The dinner-hour came, the dinner-hour passed; there were messages from the kitchen, there were hurried retreats of Mr. Felton to,

as Glen suspected, the dining-room, to fortify his courage—since on each occasion he returned a little more excited and a good deal less inclined to endure contradiction. At last he put the position to the company. Dinner had already been kept waiting half an hour for the great Mr. Gossage and the greater Mrs. Gossage—(‘Who is,’ confided the publisher to Glen, ‘such a sixty-gunner’). Should they wait any longer for these illustrious personages? Lance only ‘wanted to know,’ so he proposed that the question should be put to the vote.

Then, as with one voice, every man in the room answered ‘No;’ and the Mercury, who had been waiting at the door for final orders, flew with them to the impatient cook.

‘Fact is, you know,’ confessed Lance to Mrs. Lacere, ‘it’s deucedly awkward. She promised to come early and put us a bit in the way of things—also to bring some damask and silver we were short of; and now, how we shall manage with such a lot of people I’m sure I can’t imagine.’

‘I do not fancy anyone will know you are short if you don’t tell them,’ returned Glen, in

the same tone. 'No—no, Mr. Felton; I *cannot* go in before Lady Hilda,' she added hurriedly, as 'dinner' was proclaimed from the doorway; and thus compelled, Lance offered his arm to Lady Hicks, as he sometimes called her, taking good care to tell her ladyship, in the short passage across the hall, that he wanted to escort 'Heron's Nest,' but she refused to have anything to do with him.

'She is here, then, is she?' said Lady Hilda. 'I looked about, but I could not see her.'

'I don't know where she has got to,' answered Mr. Felton, glancing back over his left shoulder—and, indeed, at that moment it would have been hard to tell where anyone had got to—amongst the tightly packed crowd who, at last, having somehow pushed and fought their way into the dining-room, found there were not seats for much more than half their number. It was of no use standing on ceremony in that house, so some of the gentlemen, forming themselves into a volunteer corps, marched backwards and forwards between the rooms, carrying chairs, seats, and every portable article of such-like furniture.

'That's all right!' exclaimed Lance, blandly

surveying results ; ‘ sit as close as you can—we’ll all shake down presently. Where’s Mr. Lacere ? Thank you, Gervais,’ as a meek-looking gentleman in spectacles, who seemed as if he hadn’t a joke in his whole body, and yet who was, in Mr. Felton’s opinion, the greatest humourist that ever lived, landed Glen safely three seats from Mr. Felton’s right hand, and consequently next but one to Lady Hilda, whom the publisher, in an access of friendliness, had just addressed as ‘ My dear soul.’ He was relating to her the Gossage misadventure—how Mrs. Gossage had offered to show them what was what. ‘ Because, you know,’ he added, ‘ we don’t pretend to be up to all the ways of grand society.’

‘ Why did you not ask me ?’ remarked Lady Hilda ; ‘ I should have been only too delighted had you deigned to make use of my poor services. But perhaps,’ she added, with an engaging modesty, ‘ you thought I might not be exactly—capable ?’

Greatly shocked at this suggestion, Mr. Felton assured her he could not have dreamed of taking such a liberty. ‘ And besides, there was the plate—and the damask——’

‘I fancy I could have managed even that,’ said her ladyship; and then, as the work of dinner began, she leaned a little towards Mr. Felton, and inquired in a low voice, ‘Now, tell me which is Mrs. Lacere.’

‘Next but one—Mrs.—’ he was proceeding to call out, when Lady Hilda, laying her hand firmly on his, stopped the words in mid air.

‘I want to see her, that’s all,’ she explained; and leaning a little forward, so as to get the humourist’s person out of the way, she stared hard at Glen, who at length, as if subtly conscious of this scrutiny, turned her head to the foot of the table.

Lady Hilda nodded pleasantly.

‘How d’ye do?’ she said. ‘So you *have* set the Thames on fire.’

Mrs. Lacere was about to answer, when the noise of a fresh arrival caused Mr. Felton to spring from his chair, and, exclaiming ‘It’s the Gossages!’ rush excitedly from the room. There was a pause, during the continuance of which the company looked at each other, and listened to the sound of eager talking in the hall; then the door was flung wide, and

Lady Hilda, looking calmly up from her plate, which she had been regarding with a good deal of interest, beheld a figure in trailing black velvet sweep into the room. She had so little clothing on the upper part of her person, and there lay such a mass of wasted material on the carpet, that Lady Hilda might almost be excused her astonished exclamation of ‘ Good heavens !’

This was Mrs. Gossage, who had promised to come and do the prunes and prism business for the hostess, who did not sit at the head of her own table, and whom nobody but Lady Hilda seemed to know. This was Mrs. Gossage, whose face was of an unearthly pallor, and whose neck, against the deep black of her bodice, appeared the colour of driven snow. She came in coughing plaintively, and she sank, with a faint, thankful smile, into a seat vacated for her benefit, leaving about half a dozen yards of velvet on the floor for the servants to trip over, which they did, till one man, possessed of considerable presence of mind, tucked the bundle under the lady’s chair.

‘ She’s a stunner, isn’t she ?’ said Mr. Felton

to Lady Hilda, proud to think here at length was something worthy the attention even of an earl's daughter.

'She has stunned me,' answered Lady Hilda demurely. The soup, of which she partook of one spoonful, was brought back for Mrs. Gossage ; then she had fish, eating about as much as would have covered a shilling ; at intervals she coughed and was very languishing, and people paid court to her for her husband's sake, and a general frost seemed to set in over the whole of the company, that had been about to thaw before the arrival of the Gossages, till champagne appeared, which Mr. Felton told his guests he hoped they would find good—for that his wine merchant had assured him it was the very vintage for literary men.

Whatever the merits of the wine might be, it unloosened the tongues of some of the talkers present—Babel itself could not have been noisier than that dining-room. Mr. Felton laughed and applauded to the echo. There were good things said, had anyone across the table been able to hear them. The heat grew oppressive—the din more furious,

and Glen was wondering how much longer the ladies would be expected to sit at table, when Mr. Felton's right-hand neighbour, after looking vainly at the hostess for the usual signal, and seeing Mrs. Felton did not seem to have the faintest idea of giving it, took the initiative upon herself, and, glancing at Mrs. Lacere, said, 'Had we not better go?' and rising as she spoke, walked out of the room, greatly to the relief of the males, who had been inwardly wondering when on earth 'those women meant to move!'

'Dear me!' exclaimed Lady Hilda, standing in the middle of the drawing-room, and fetching a deep breath; 'Dear me!' and then she crossed over to the mantelpiece and looked at herself in the mirror, and afterwards strolled leisurely round the apartment, examining everything in it—undeterred by any supervision on the part of Mrs. Felton, who had gone, as one lady suggested, to the nursery to see her dear children.

'Kitchen most likely,' amended Lady Hilda, with calm insolence; then, turning her attention to Glen, she observed, 'You are rather bread-and-buttery still. Oh! I see you do

not understand—that dear, delightful Vassett never told tales out of school. Never, never, never, so long as I live, shall I forget the solemn face with which he told me the first time we met, “You had as much to learn as I to unlearn.” You don’t look as if you had learnt much, but “still water runs deep,” et cetera; I suppose you know the end of the proverb.’

Yes Glen confessed she did; and as Lady Hilda spoke Mrs. Lacere’s memory took a long flight backward to that breezy hillside, where she had first heard one of the ‘boys’ delivering himself of the objectionable sentence in its entirety.

‘I thought so,’ commented her ladyship. ‘Ah! I see we shall suit each other admirably. Well, and how is our old friend in Craven Street?’ and marching Glen slowly about the room, perfectly regardless of and indifferent to the looks of surprise and indignation which followed them, Lady Hilda found herself once more on the hearthrug, and again gazing in the mirror.

‘Won’t your ladyship sit down?’ asked

an elderly dame, who had prayed to be allowed to come in just for an hour—that she might say she had seen all ‘those wonderful writers’—rising and offering Lady Hilda a corner of a sofa, otherwise well filled by the wives of two men great in the opinion of Lance Felton.

‘Her ladyship’ surveyed the speaker for a moment in amazement; then, ‘I never sit down,’ she answered.

‘Lor’!’ exclaimed the other.

‘I never voluntarily doom myself to the chance of being bored,’ kindly explained Lady Hilda. And then she would have swept on her travels round the room for the second time, had a low, tremulous voice, murmuring, ‘Oh, Mrs. Lacere!’ not arrested her progress. ‘I have so longed to make your acquaintance,’ proceeded Mrs. Gossage—for it was she. ‘I hope you will allow me to introduce myself—my name is Gossage. Of course you have heard Mr. Felton speak of my husband? We are both enthusiastic admirers of your books; indeed, I may say it was only the hope of meeting you brought me here this evening. It was madness, I know, to venture;

but I told my husband, whatever the consequences, I could not miss the chance of seeing you.'

And she smiled sweetly up at Lady Hilda, who was staring stonily at her, while Glen stammered out some reply to the barefaced compliment, looking as she spoke certainly as though she had never written a line of manuscript in her life.

'I ought not to have come,' continued Mrs. Gossage. 'My doctor said if I did it would be simple suicide, and that he could not answer for the consequences. I have been very ill with inflammation of the lungs, and my chest is naturally delicate——'

'Then why in the world, if you have been so ill, and are so delicate, did you not put on some clothes before undertaking such a journey? Here,' and at this juncture Lady Hilda pulled a striped woollen antimacassar from behind the highly proper dame who had offered her a seat—threw it over Mrs. Gossage's white shoulders—wrapped it round her neck—drew it tight up under her chin, where she fastened it close with a hairpin extracted from her ladyship's chignon—and then, remarking

‘That’s better,’ took Glen by the hand and led her away, unmindful of the extraordinary figure she left standing on the hearthrug, and the looks of blank dismay with which all the ladies present regarded her proceedings.

‘Let’s go into the conservatory,’ suggested Lady Hilda, ‘and get a breath of air. Funny sort of place this, isn’t it? By-the-bye, don’t you have anything to do with that woman—Mrs. Gossage, I mean.’

‘Why not?’ asked Glen.

‘Never you mind—be a good child, and do as you are told. Well, and what do you think of the Felton *ménage*? Dear me, you need not be so cautious,’ she went on, when Glen said she had not seen much of it as yet. ‘I never told you my first experience of the establishment, did I?’

It would have been difficult for her to have done so, as she had not exchanged a dozen words with Mrs. Lacere before in her life; but, speaking as if Glen were an old acquaintance, she added:

‘When our publisher asked me to come down and stay at his “place in the country,” and I accepted his invitation, I thought I

should see some great mansion; so to do honour to Mr. and Mrs. Felton—who I felt sure would have heaps of servants and were living in grand style—I borrowed a friend's carriage, and drove down one afternoon with my maid. It was dark when we arrived. The gas was lighted in the hall, and, as no one appeared in answer to my summons, I walked straight in through the door, which usually stands wide open.

‘At that moment Mrs. Felton, whom I had never seen, was coming out of the dining-room, arrayed in a black skirt and a white garibaldi. I mistook her for a servant, and asked her to send some one to carry in my boxes, which she did; never telling me who she was, or enlightening me when I begged her to show my maid my rooms.

‘Meantime, seeing a fire in the apartment we have just left, I thought I would warm myself a little till somebody came to me, and was about stirring the coals into a good blaze, when Parkins—that's my maid—rushed downstairs, at a pace quite unprecedented.

“‘If you please, m' lady,” she began, quite in a temper, “where am I to sleep?”

“How, in Heaven’s name, should I know, Parkins !” I answered.

“Because Mrs. Felton—*that*, if you please, m’ lady, was the mistress of the house you saw in the hall—says if I don’t sleep in your apartment, she doesn’t know where she can possibly put me up, *except in Mr. Felton’s dressing-room!* And so I’ve come down, if you please, m’ lady, to say——”

“Don’t say it, Parkins !” I entreated. “The best thing you can do is to go straight back to town. The carriage is still here, I think. Tell the coachman to wait for you.”

“I dressed myself for dinner that evening by the light of one solitary dip with a long snuff in a flat candlestick, and the children partook of the meal with us, and messed their food about ; and Mr. Felton was sulky because something had gone wrong in Burleigh Street, and he told me Laplash was a “stupid beast,” and that there was not a soul in his office he could trust to make out an invoice—whatever an invoice may be—and——”

“Oh ! see, there is Mrs. Felton at last !” interrupted Glen ; “I must go and speak to her. I have never been introduced, or—or

anything. Pray excuse me,' and, leaving the conservatory, she found the hostess, and sat down beside her, and talked as much as she could ; for which heroic effort she was rewarded by Mrs. Felton telling Mr. Felton next day, for her part she could see nothing in that Mrs. Lacere, who talked 'just like anybody else. In her opinion, Lady Hilda Hicks was worth fifty of her.'

The gentlemen by this time were dropping in slowly, and Lady Hilda, having got hold of a great traveller, was gravely asking him what he thought of the British Lion?

"I prefer the African," he replied, both question and answer being Greek to the old lady who was waiting for pearls and diamonds and emeralds to drop from the mouths of Mr. Felton's guests.

It was at this moment Lady Hilda, whose eyes were everywhere and on everyone, saw a glance pass between Glen and her husband, which told her a certain grave-looking individual was Mr. Lacere. Leaving the distinguished traveller, of whom she had already wearied, and who felt extremely glad to be rid of her, she sidled round to this new object

of her curiosity, to whom, without the slightest preface, she remarked :

‘Your wife is a wonderful woman.’

Mr. Lacere only bowed in reply, but as he bowed he smiled.

‘Humph!’ thought Lady Hilda, ‘spoony on her still.’ And though her own literary career had been one long glorification of women, and a series of essays on the general hatefulness of men, illustrated by examples drawn from personal experience, she yet felt so angry at this unexpected folly on the part of Glen’s husband that she would have liked to slap Mr. Lacere on the instant.

‘For there is something in him,’ she decided, ‘and there’s nothing in his stupid idiot of a wife.’

‘You must be very proud,’ went on Lady Hilda sweetly, ‘of what she has done.’

‘I am more proud of what she is,’ he answered; and then he let his eyes rove off again in search of Glen, who this time, her attention being otherwise engaged, was not looking at him.

‘Good heavens! what a simpleton a wise man may be!’ considered Mr. Hicks’s widow;

and she was proceeding to say some pleasant things about Mrs. Lacere's 'extraordinary book,' when Mr. Felton, making his way across to where she stood, hoped her ladyship would kindly 'sing them a song.'

'One comfort,' answered Lady Hilda, 'if I do, nobody will listen.' And she walked off to the piano, taking Mr. Lacere for her escort, and asking him as they went if his wife played and sang, and whether it was true that he wrote many parts of her books, and wondering he had not been afraid to marry such a clever creature,—'because,' she added, 'I know as a rule men detest clever women'—and begging him to say what he would like her to sing, and stating, *sotto voce*, she felt it would be like lifting up her voice in the Zoological Gardens. And then at last she began a simple little ballad, into which she flung such taste and feeling and soul, a dead silence fell on the room, and there was an involuntary movement towards the vocalist.

'And now I'll sing you something merry after that!' exclaimed her versatile ladyship; and striking a few chords, she broke into a catching, mocking little German song, which

made her audience laugh without exactly understanding why, and caused Mr. Felton to applaud so loudly, and call for an encore with such vehemence, that, under cover of the noise, Glen managed to get beside her husband and suggest they should steal away as soon as possible. They were in the hall and bidding good-night to the hostess, whom they encountered there, ere Mr. Felton missed them. When he did, however, he was on their track in a moment.

‘You’re not going yet!’ he exclaimed. ‘Why, the evening’s scarce begun. Last week there were a lot of fellows here, and when they got down to the station they found there was no train till seven o’clock in the morning. So they came back again, and we sat up all night and had a jolly time of it.’

Mr. Lacere, at this juncture, stated very positively he did not intend to miss the next train or to sit up all night; and, laughing, Glen shook hands with Mr. Felton, who followed her to the door, exclaiming:

‘Now, are you sure you have enjoyed yourself?—have you had a good time?—did you have everything you wanted? Lacere, do

take a glass of brandy—do, before you go out into the night air! And you'll come again, won't you? We don't profess to know what's what; but if our friends will only say what they would like—— Well, if you must go—good-night, good-night! and thank you for coming.'

Mrs. Lacere could not have told anyone what it was about this address that touched and somehow seemed to hurt her; but when she got out under the stars, she could not see them for a mist of tears, and she felt she was very sorry for Lance Felton, and that, so far as she herself was concerned, she wished—ah! most heartily!—she had never turned out of the Strand that evening and walked up Burleigh Street, and passed through the office of Felton and Laplash into a new world!

The next afternoon she had an appointment to see Mr. Felton, and discuss some business arrangements. According to custom, the principal in the firm was not alone—Mr. Kelly chanced on that occasion to be the welcome visitor, and to him Lance was pouring out an account of the delights of the previous evening—reciting the names of the celebrities that

had been present—recounting the episode of Mrs. Gossage, who left them in the lurch ‘for linen, silver, and manners; not but what we did very well without all!’—and giving Barney a rapid sketch of the doings and sayings of the company.

‘That’s what she wants, you know,’ proceeded Mr. Felton, referring to Glen, who did not dare to look at her former travelling-companion, as Lance took up his parable. ‘It will do her all the good in the world to see a little of life, and mix in society, and know what’s going on amongst her fellow-creatures. We were never intended for hermits; and for a writer in particular to lock the door against everybody is the greatest mistake possible. New ideas—new ideas are the things, Kelly; what do you say?’

‘That I hope Mrs. Lacere will not abandon her old ideas till she is very sure the new are better. If she take my advice she will stay quietly at home, and leave general society to those who do not need time for thought, or leisure in which to produce original books.’

‘There’s a compliment wrapped up somewhere in that sentence, if we could only

find it,' observed Mr. Felton, a little puzzled.

'There's a warning, at any rate,' said Barney. 'I hope I have not offended you, Mrs. Lacere.'

'No—oh no!' she answered; and then their eyes met, and Glen knew she and Mr. Kelly did not differ greatly in opinion concerning the demerits of the clique with which, against her better judgment, she had become associated.

And so Time, which never stops, went on very rapidly, and Mrs. Logan-Lacere, who had once lived the quietest of lives, got acquainted with many sorts and conditions of men, and found herself, 'as Mr. Lance Felton felicitously expressed the matter, 'before she knew where she was, in the full swing of general Society.'



CHAPTER VII.

MR. FELTON CRITICIZES.

‘**I** CANNOT imagine, Kelly, how it is you get so near nature, and yet never manage to touch it.’

This agreeable speech was, of course, made by Mr. Felton, and the matter under criticism chanced, unhappily, to be that novel which Barney had fondly believed would prove, in comparison to all other modern novels, as ‘wine unto water.’

He had kept the manuscript by him (compulsorily), if not quite for seven, at least for a good many years; and during the whole of that time his greatest pleasure was to correct and re-write a work he considered only required a pushing publisher to make a mark in

literature not likely soon to be obliterated. It was a book constructed, as he fondly believed, on quite new principles, combining the advantages while avoiding the faults of every style of narrative which had yet appeared.

It possessed all the merits of Godwin's play as silyly enumerated by Charles Lamb, and fell quite as flat. It was 'too clever, too rich, too full of plums, too refined, too epigrammatic; its sarcasm was too delicate—its humour too subtle—to find favour with a public whose taste had been vitiated by a course of modern fiction,' said Mr. Kelly's friends.

'It's heavy as lead,' was the shorter commentary passed upon it by the Felton clique; while the 'outside barbarians'—the subscribers to Mudie's—sent the book back as if the plague were in it.

'A dead failure,' was Mr. Felton's summing up of the matter. 'Well, there is nobody to blame but myself;' for he had, in spite of Mr. Kelly's coy protests, and shy 'I don't really think it will suit you,' insisted on publishing the novel—which certainly did not owe its ill-success to any want of advertising, pushing, or puffing. Preliminary paragraphs in the literary

papers hinted that a rich treat was in store for the readers of fiction ; that such a book as that advertised by Messrs. Felton and Laplash, the work of Mr. Kelly, the well-known essayist, had not been produced since the days of Fielding.

Lance himself had blown its trumpet till listeners were almost fain to stop their ears ; and now the three volumes were to be had at the libraries for the asking, nobody wanted them. The worst novel of the season went better than Barney's masterpiece, which he had been improving and expanding and curtailing and interleaving for years, which was, in fact, an epitome of his Hibernian and London experiences—a treasury full of all the good stories he had heard—a mine of wisdom—a storehouse of knowledge—dramatic, pathetic, sensational, objective, subjective, and Heaven only knows what besides. Barney had felt going over the proof-sheets a labour of love. The printing, the paper, the binding, were all matters of anxiety and solicitude to him. No title, he fondly believed, ever before looked so well in an advertisement. He read all, and indeed wrote many, of the preliminary puffs, and believed everything they stated ; and this was

the end—a dead failure and Mr. Felton's criticisms !

Ignoring that pleasing remark concerning his inability to draw from life as beneath contempt, Mr. Kelly stated his willingness to repay his publishers any loss they might have sustained through the book. It was a proposition with which the junior, or 'silent' partner, as Glen called him, would have closed on the spot, but Mr. Felton pooh-poohed the idea, as if he had the Bank of England at his back.

'That's not the way we do things here,' he said. 'If we make a good bargain, we take the profit ; if we make a bad one, we put up with the loss. We'll pull through your deficit over Mrs. Lacere's book—now, there's nature if you like !'

'We can't all be Mrs. Laceres,' remarked Barney, with a fine irony perfectly thrown away upon Mr. Felton, who answered :

'No, faith !—I only wish you could. In that case publishing would be more of a money-making game than it is. By Jove ! I didn't think she could have beaten "Heron's Nest," but she has. There's go—there's sparkle—there's

wit—there's life. I declare, when I was reading over that book in proof I had often to stop and ask myself, "Can a woman have written this? How the deuce does she come to know all about these things?" And such a woman, too—skim-milk and colourless, and still bread-and-buttery, as Lady Hilda says. To quote Hicks, "You would swear she had passed her whole life mending stockings and reading tracts, and cutting out flannel petticoats for Dorcas societies."'

As he paced the London pavements that day after leaving Burleigh Street, Mr. Kelly thought more about Mrs. Lacere than he had ever done before. Always he felt a certain, though possibly unconscious, antipathy to her. From their first meeting on board the Morecambe boat, she failed utterly to attract him in any way—quite the reverse. 'Has beens,' to repeat a remark made in a very early chapter, possessed no charm for the then unfledged Barney. The class from which he had sprung, and the class to which he aspired, seemed tangible and intelligible; but people who were going down in the world, instead of struggling up the social ladder, seemed to Mr.

Kelly's common-sense, anomalies that had no business on the earth at all. And now the shabbily dressed young girl, grown into womanhood, presented herself as a rival in the field of literature—further, it was impossible for him to guess what she might not have said concerning her travelling-companion on that gloomy October day !

He had always entertained his doubts about her. When they met at Mr. Vassett's he marvelled whether she would remember and repeat that slip of his concerning the English nation and his Satanic Majesty ; but from no sign or word of either the Craven Street publisher or Mr. Pierson could he conjecture she ever mentioned him at all. Still, when Mr. Felton got hold of her, a deeper anxiety took possession of Barney's mind.

From fifty little trifles he knew, whatever else she lacked—and, according to Mr. Felton, outside her books she was deficient in most things—Mrs. Lacere did not fail in the faculty of observation. Was it likely, therefore, she had omitted to photograph him in her memory as he once had been—raw, *gauche*, practically utterly ignorant of the manners and habits of good

society, and clad, moreover, in a brown coat made by the Callinacoan tailor—the very memory of which made Mr. Kelly's blood tingle as he recalled the figure he must have presented in it.

When he met Glen on that memorable evening at Burleigh Street, something in her weary look, the indecision of her manner, her 'senseless loyalty,' as Mr. Felton said, to Mr. Vassett, the reluctance with which she went to make hay surely any other woman on earth would have eagerly sprung to stack, inspired him with a certain chivalrous sympathy and conviction she had never confided to anyone the circumstances of their first meeting; but, without knowing Lady Hilda's expressed opinion, he had long been coming round to the idea that still waters do flow deep.

'She's a deuce of a "take off," I'm sure,' confided Mr. Laplash once, in a special burst of irritation against the successful authoress. 'She may think I'm blind and deaf, but I can both hear and see. She scarcely ever opens her lips without a sort of sneer.'

'But what is there to sneer at?'

'Ah! you mightn't find anything, because

you haven't much sense of humour, as it's called ;' Barney stood rigid with indignation—he who believed his own perception of the ridiculous to be the finest and most prominent trait in his literary character ! 'but others know what she is after. There's Noll, now, he can't bear her ; and for all he is so pious and quiet, he is able to read character well.'

It was of these things and many more Mr. Kelly thought as he bent his steps to New Oxford Street. He had declined Mr. Felton's eager offer of the Lacere new book, on the ground that he had little time for reading. Nevertheless, he was going straight to Mudie's to get the novel so disgustingly be-praised, and find out if he could what made it sell, while his own much better work hung fire.

That evening and the next morning he devoted to Mrs. Lacere's lengthy three volumes. When he came to the last page, he smiled—not pleasantly.

Very shortly after there appeared in a then noted journal a savage attack on the work of 'a greatly over-rated author.' This review was written by Barney, and many were the

guesses—all erroneous—made as to the personality of the reviewer. If Barney's own book had been heavy, the same fault certainly could not be found with his critique. It was airy and amusing. He used the whip judiciously, and touched up every raw to be found in the author's style. He ridiculed the passages other reviewers had praised; he was severe on grammatical mistakes, on erroneous quotations; he extolled the productions of other novelists in order that he might the better contrast their excellences with Mrs. Lacere's defects; he said the book lacked consistency, probability, and interest; that her villains were impossible, and her virtuous characters tame and mawkish; that she wrote concerning a state of society of which she knew nothing; and, that in effect, she placed her heroes and heroines in a world the like of which no eye had ever beheld, and no mind would ever be able to understand.

In Burleigh Street this review fell with the force of a thunderbolt. It was the first really bad notice Glen had met with since she 'made her name.' Coming from the source it did, the review made a great impression, and one

that was unfavourable to the author. People felt ashamed to have admired passages they were now told were only calculated to cause wonder and mirth in cultivated minds ; to have been touched by pathos, they were credibly informed could not be considered other than utter bathos ; to have been amused by poor and twaddling anecdotes, and to have considered a story wonderfully original, the plot of which the reviewer conclusively proved had been taken bodily from one of the trashiest novels ever issued by the Minerva Press.

The number of persons who called in at Burleigh Street to ask Mr. Felton if he had seen the review in the *Independent* was astonishing.

‘ You have got a jolly slating at last,’ said Lance to Mrs. Lacere, who laughed till Mr. Laplash observed it was no laughing matter—for them, at least.

‘ Well, Mrs. Lacere,’ exclaimed some of the Burleigh Street loungers, ‘ and what do you say to the notice of your book in the *Independent* ?’

‘ Oh ! I don’t mind,’ she answered. ‘ I suppose the person who wrote it has to earn his

living as I have, and it must be far easier to write a bad notice than a good one.'

'I am so sorry,' said Mrs. Kelly to her husband, 'to see that shockingly ill-natured criticism on Mrs. Lacere's book in the *Independent*. I consider it absolutely cruel to write about a lady in that bitter way. In my opinion it is most unmanly.'

Barney looked up from the *Times*, which he was reading, and answered, 'I dare say the review will make the book sell all the better; and as to the lack of chivalry about the notice, when women choose to enter the lists with men they must not complain if they occasionally get hurt—sex is neither recognised nor respected in criticism.'

'Well, I do not think the review fair, and Mrs. Lacere is really so nice it makes the matter far worse. As I told you, I was introduced to her last night, and when we were talking about your novel, she said, "She thought the heroine the sweetest female character she had ever met with in fiction;" it was such delightful praise.' And Mrs. Kelly bridled a little, and toyed with her toast, and looked conscious as sweet seventeen

might have done; while Barney, his eyes only that instant opened to the truth, thought, in utter astonishment, 'Why, she imagines she sat for the portrait! Good heavens!'

'Who was with Mrs. Lacere?' he asked aloud.

'Her husband; quiet, gentlemanly, but to my fancy somewhat reserved and cold. He took me down to supper, and I happened incidentally to mention Mrs. Lacere's pretty compliment to your novel.'

'“Yes,” he said, “my wife is charmed with the book.”'

'“Have you read it?” I inquired.

'“No,” he replied. “Unfortunately, I have little time to spare now for reading of any kind.”'

'“But no doubt,” I suggested, “you have pored over every line Mrs. Lacere has written.”'

'He actually smiled as he answered, “I am sorry I have not even read all her books.”'

'Sensible man,' commented Barney.

'My dear, I call it horrid. Fancy my saying I had not read *your* books—fancy missing a single word you ever wrote! And then, besides, she really is very clever. I assured him

she possessed great talent, and he said, "Yes, he thought so too," but quietly, without the slightest enthusiasm, as if he had been remarking that it was a fine night.'

'Really, it is quite a comfort to hear Mr. Lacere is so discreet a person. His wife living in such an atmosphere of flattery out of doors, he does right to teach her she is not regarded quite as a prophet at home.'

'But surely you think she is clever—for a woman?' asked Mrs. Kelly.

'I think she is clever, decidedly,' he answered, 'and she has made a certain mark in the world; but she is going the fair way to lose all the advantage she has gained. She ought to stop at home and write her books and mind her house, and see her husband's slippers are warmed, instead of going about to parties and listening to foolish compliments, and frittering away such talents as God has given her in small-talk and company babble.'

'How you talk, Bernard! Would you permit a woman to have no mental relaxation in bright society? No——'

'My dear,' he interrupted, 'circumstances alter cases. That which is quite proper for you

is improper for Mrs. Lacere. Her husband has no private means, and is only in a modest way of business. She had not any fortune, and though she may have made some considerable sum by her writings, you must remember when she ceases to write she will cease to make money. All this modern business of society making lions of authors, and authoresses rushing frantically into society, is a complete mistake. Not so did the great men, whose names will live as long as the English language is spoken, conduct themselves. Routs, and balls, and dinners three hours long, and garden-parties, knew them not. To the outside public they were only known by their works. Now the outside public is so constantly given the opportunity of seeing men who are thought great, at play, that it will soon begin to doubt if they ever do any work at all.'

'That is very true, no doubt,' answered Mrs. Kelly; 'but still Mrs. Lacere is a woman, and it is only natural, poor thing, she should like to visit, and hear people praising her books, and——'

'Well, all I mean to say,' interrupted

Barney, who had no desire for the Lacere question to haunt him even at breakfast, 'is, Mrs. Lacere cannot have her cake and eat it too. To turn to another subject. I have determined to start a review of my own, conducted on new and equitable principles. It seems to me there is an opening for a really good critical paper, written by men who have not got into a groove, and do not belong to a clique. I shall call it *The Dragon*, and think it will prove a great success. What do you think?'

'Why, of course, Bernard, if you commence a review it *must* be successful. The idea strikes me as delightful. I wonder it has never occurred to you before.'

'It has often,' replied Barney; 'but I did not see my way till lately.'

'Shall you have Mrs. Lacere on the staff?' asked Mrs. Kelly; and her tone warned the fortunate husband that if he was not careful fifty little green-eyed monsters might rise to trouble his domestic peace.

'Not a woman,' he answered emphatically—'maid, wife, or widow—shall write a line for it. As deep-sea fishermen object to push off

with a parson on board, so I should feel my venture doomed to shipwreck if a lady were one of the "hands." No,' he added, 'except yourself, no woman shall have a say in the matter. My review will be the sainted isle, and I—Senanus.'

'Ah! but remember,' said Mrs. Kelly, 'Moore's song implies that if the lady had waited till there was light enough for the saint to see her, she had never left the isle.'

'I can solemnly assure you no lady shall get the chance of seeing *me* in my double capacity of proprietor and editor,' observed Barney, smiling.

'To hear you speak about my sex,' exclaimed Mrs. Kelly, 'anyone might think you were most unhappy in your matrimonial relations.'

'It is because I am so happy,' returned Barney gallantly; 'I feel I must have made the one lucky draw out of the bag of snakes.'

'Oh! fie, fie!' said Mrs. Kelly rebukingly; but she was delighted nevertheless, and would still go on praising Glen for her talent, and

the 'delicate compliment' about Barney's heroine, and pitying her concerning that wretched review in the *Independent*, without any stalking figure of jealousy casting its shadow before.





CHAPTER VIII.

A GREAT WINDFALL.

IT is not given to many men to pass one whole year into which no pecuniary trouble enters, and yet it was just such a reprieve Glen had brought her husband.

Never before—never—in all his struggling youth and his hard-worked manhood could he remember such a time of blissful ease and prosperity. It was only too good, too free from anxiety; but Mr. Lacere's was not a temperament to question concerning the blessings Heaven sent him. He could only thank God, not aloud—not for the world to hear—but silently, sincerely, amazedly, for the relief compassed for him by the only woman he had ever loved.

It astonished him. He felt it was impossible he could sufficiently prove the gratitude he felt to her and his Maker. Prosperity flowed in upon him like a tide. The seed he had sown was bearing fruit ; the business he had made and watched and tended had grown big enough to shelter him and his household. Looking back, he could scarcely believe that in so comparatively short a time it had been possible to build up such a trade. Money ! it came in that year like water ; and though it may have been spent as freely, it was honestly, if not judiciously, spent in paying old debts, in still extending his trade, and in adapting the household to changed conditions and altered circumstances.

For him it was the first year of plenty since he had taken the cares of manhood on his young shoulders, and the Almighty alone knew what the burden of the nearly three times seven barren years preceding must have proved. Years of labour ; years of hope deferred ; years during the course of which what he made was wrested from him almost ere he could count his winnings ; years the light of love had not brightened or friendship

strengthened. The life of a horse in a mill it might have seemed to some, and yet it was a beautiful life in its total self-abnegation, in its utter unselfishness—its toil for those who were most ungrateful, but who seemed to him, viewed through the glamour of a deluded affection, possessed of all virtues.

The pleasure of conferring kindnesses, of being able to feed, clothe, and house the members of his family, had ever seemed to this man worth all the work, anxiety, and toil the burden entailed ; and now, when he was easy as regarded money matters—happy in his home and his wife—it seemed to him as though he were floating in a dream down a golden river towards a golden sea.

What a year that was in which every day might have been marked with a white pebble ! If only Glen would have liked and understood his relations, he felt life could hold nothing more to ask for ; but she never had liked, and he was convinced never understood them, and the change wrought by success in his circumstances of necessity produced an apparent estrangement between him and his family, which he strove by every means in his

power to prove was wrought by no alteration in his feeling for them.

To him, success in business meant an increase of work which might well have appalled a different man ; but he never complained. The close of the long day never found him fagged, or cross, or weary ; no matter how late he went to rest, he was always astir early. What ! should he idle now, when, for the first time, fortune seemed tired of persecuting—when everything was going well with him and his ?

A whole year without sickness, or sorrow, or loss, or anxiety ! A year, during which Time's footsteps, shod with velvet, slipped so swiftly and silently by, it was gone ere half its blessedness was felt or comprehended—gone like a radiant summer, which has scarcely served to warm hearts chilled and numbed by the snows and frosts of winter before the autumn leaves are falling and the moaning wind is singing their requiem. During the year, opportunities such as had never before come in his way presented themselves ; offers were made — agencies pressed upon him. But, believing that by entering on any

fresh undertaking he would be unable to devote all his energies to the old, he held blindly on, strong in the faith that he had established a trade which would eventually make him practically independent of the world.

His cousin also had ceased to be a drag upon his resources. He was at length established in a business which promised solvency and respectability. Everything was going well. To such a temper happiness can never come 'too late;' indeed, to one who, without any pretence, or ostentation, or outward and visible signs of his inward belief, save what may be gathered from his life, walks silently on earth with God—that phrase, 'Too late,' is one utterly destitute of meaning. Though she had been brought up in the straitest sect of the Pharisees, Glen, by comparison with her husband, was an outer heathen. Her life in those days could be regarded but as a long unrest.

'She does not know what she wants,' said Lady Hilda, freely discussing Mrs. Lacere amongst her friends. 'Success has turned her brain; and if Mr. Lacere were other than the most devoted of husbands, he would not have patience with her.'

Making all allowance for the fact that Lady Hilda herself was a woman and a novelist, it must be confessed there was too much truth in her summary of Mrs. Lacere. The outer world might and did think that lady pleasant and agreeable ; but, nevertheless, success had somewhat ‘turned her brain,’ and she persisted in refusing to listen to the ‘still, small voice’ of common-sense which kept for ever crying to her in those days: ‘You are mad, Glen. Was it for *this* you had such a chance given you as does not fall to the lot of one woman in a million? Look back to the humble home and the modest aspirations of your girlhood, and say whether you believe your present life is fitting or unfitting you for the career in which you have already achieved a success as astonishing to yourself as to those who never thought there was much in you.’

Often in the middle of the whirl of society in which she had no right to live, Ned Beattie’s words, long forgotten, recurred to her: ‘I only hope he won’t let you get your head.’ She had ‘got her head’ now with a vengeance, and was going a pace which could not by any possibility last.

Well, there was this much to be said in her excuse—her early youth had never known gaiety. With her temperament, with her nationality, she must have been more than human to turn her back to the lights and the music and the glamour of Society—to sit apart whilst others were dancing, to seclude herself from praise, which was to her the very breath of life—to decline invitations such as anyone might have felt gratified to receive—to thrust back proffered friendship and pleasant acquaintanceship, and to say in that time of triumphant hope and—fame, shall we call it? —‘All is vanity.’

Still, most undoubtedly she was wrong, and she knew it; as a man cannot serve two masters, so an author cannot work and play.

She was doing herself no good, morally, physically, or intellectually. She took her pleasure then, but she had to pay for it afterwards. She was spending her strength, her time, her substance, for naught. At the end of a year, what was left for all those wasted hours, in which she ought to have been building up and fortifying her literary reputation, save a confused memory of luxury and per-

fume, and amazing extravagance, and rich dresses and rare wines and costly food, and the recollection of thousands of strange faces and unfamiliar voices, and the knowledge she had brought no single great thought, or original idea, or high aspiration out of the turmoil?

But she did not pause either to reflect or repent while leading a life which left her no time for quiet thought. As she imagined, she had almost touched the highest peak of fame to which she could ever hope to climb. Sought after, flattered, caressed, made much of—ah me!—did there come no moment when she dared to ask herself what the end would prove? Even in dreams was no warning vouchsafed of the hour when for her the lamps would be extinguished and the flowers fade and perish, and the sound of music be heard no more, and the footsteps of the dancers be silent—when she should know in all its bitterness what it is to be forgotten—understand the applause she had delighted in was not Fame, and, proclaiming her name and what she had done, receive for answer, ‘*We never even heard of you*’?

She had read of such things happening to other people, but for her, of course, they could have no application. When the woods are green and the banks bright with blossoms, who realizes the coming time when the trees will stand brown and bare, and not even a daisy appear to gladden the eyes of the weary wayfarer? When the *prima donna* stands half buried in bouquets, listening to the wild applause of a delighted audience, does it ever occur to her that the fate which has befallen others may yet prove hers, and that she will in the future be hissed off the boards now deemed honoured by her tread? In like manner Glenarva Lacere, then able almost to command her own prices, could not foretell that evil days were coming when she should be able to command no price at all.

Yet she ought to have known. The three warnings given by Death were never plainer than the signs vouchsafed to Mrs. Lacere. If no other human being knew Mr. Lance Felton's resources were not exhaustless, she did. By a score of tokens she was perfectly well aware the great business in Burleigh

Street was not built upon a rock ; further, she should have remembered the period of scarcity during which her husband had been barely able to hold his own, and devoted herself to saving what money she could ; improving her mind, laying in fresh stores of knowledge, and strengthening her body, which she was doing her very best to enfeeble.

And yet still she would not listen to the evidence of her own eyes and ears. Plainly almost as a man could speak, Mr. Felton told her the harvest authors were then gathering could not last.

‘So far I have been going in for fame ; after a while I mean to go in for money,’ he would say. And again, ‘You know I can’t afford these prices. It’s all very fine having a lot of crack authors on my lists, but I want to see some margin for myself.’ Or else, ‘You mustn’t take these bills to my bankers ; they have as much paper as they will stand’—a most ominous declaration, and one certainly not to be explained away by the fact that Mr. Felton was not quite sober when he made it.

Mrs. Lacere had long previously discovered

that 'Lance' was very rarely sober; indeed, so rarely as to be never.

It was over 'the bid' he made her for the two books honourably mentioned to Mr. Kelly she arrived at this fact, and also at the other fact likewise patent to Barney, that whatever Mr. Felton's physical condition might be, his business faculty never got drunk.

For, sitting on one side of the office-table, and Mrs. Lacere on the other, he managed on the occasion in question to knock just six hundred pounds off the sum 'Heron's Nest' had expected to receive.

He told her all his struggles, or at least as many of them as he thought would serve his purpose; again said how badly he had been treated by some persons, concerning whose identity he was discreetly reticent, but whom he earnestly longed to 'splash' when he drove past them in the carriage he meant hereafter to set up; he explained that he and Mr. Laplash did not 'hit it off'—which, indeed, everyone who entered the office could not fail to see. He was very contemptuous in his references to his partner, whom he described

as a 'slow-coach,' and even dropped various hints disparaging to saintly 'Noll.'

'Neither of them like you,' he said, with unnecessary frankness. 'But never you mind that; I'm the head man, and I mean to keep the lead, but you must help me. You stick to me, and I'll stick to you. I can't give you what I thought I should be able for those two books; but if you don't hold out for terms now—and you won't get such good terms as I offer anywhere else—when things are a little smoother you won't find me forget you. Don't you believe me? Don't you think I have done well by you? Don't you know I'm your friend?'

The end of it all being that Glen consented to the proposed reduction, and that Mr. Felton wished to shake hands over the bargain; but, finding himself unequal to the feat of standing on his legs, wisely abandoned the effort and took refuge in tears. He recited his troubles over again, and said most of his authors were a —— ungrateful set; that all they wanted was to 'suck a man's blood,' after which they would leave him 'as a spider leaves a dead fly.' He declared he meant to

do great things, and that with Glen's help he would do them; that she need not trouble herself about money; that Mrs. Lacere would never find cause to repent trusting him.

'I've just got into a bit of a corner,' he went on; 'but that will come all right. My bankers would advance me any sum I wanted—thirty thousand, if need be—but I don't like to ask them; it looks bad, you know—deuced bad. And now you'll get on with your work, won't you? and we'll rattle a book out as soon as ever you can let me have it; and put plenty of life and anecdote and "go" in every chapter, and we'll carry the town by storm yet.'

Which was all very well, and very encouraging; but when the time came for Mr. Felton to fulfil his part of the bargain, Mrs. Lacere found he did not evince the same alacrity in offering to increase her payment as he had in lowering it.

Quite the contrary, indeed. Not merely did the diplomatic Lance volunteer no suggestion of 'sticking to Mrs. Lacere as she had stuck to him,' but he actually remarked that he

thought it would be good for her to take a holiday, and give her brain a little rest.

‘They say, you know,’ he proceeded, ‘you’ve been overdoing it; and then that review in the *Independent*—not that I mind reviews; know too much about who writes them, and where they are written, and why they are written. Still, the public believe in them; and, after all, there was a great deal of truth in that notice. You’d better take care what you are about. Suppose you lie by altogether for a few months. There is no reason why you should always have a novel on the stocks. At any rate, I’m not in a position—I have not the time to go into the matter of a new book from you now.’

And so, professing to be in a great bustle and hurry, having to go to the West to see a ‘tremendous swell,’ who wanted him to bring out a book of travels, son of the Earl of That, and nephew of the Duke of Something Else, and married to a Russian princess—Mr. Felton begged Glen to excuse him, and rushed out of the office, leaving her to confide her sorrows and grievances, if she pleased, to Mr. Laplash.

But Glen did not please to do this. Following Mr. Felton's example, she departed from the office, after exchanging a few words with the two men who 'didn't like her,' wondering greatly. This was the first real check she had met with in Burleigh Street, and she did not like it. She felt she had been badly treated. While writing those two books, she had been urged on by both partners. If life and death had hung on her copy, they could not more earnestly have implored her to supply good 'batches' to the printer. She did not spare herself in the matter. It was real honest work she turned out, even at high-pressure speed; and she finished one book, under the compulsion of incessant entreaty, in so short a time that even Mr. Laplash was moved to admiration, and wrote, 'I can say nothing but bless you,' from which the intelligent reader will gather there was indeed urgent need the book should be completed.

And now, when *she* wanted money, to be told to take a holiday! Why, for those two books she had not got more than she hoped, after the success of 'Heron's Nest,' to receive for one. She felt she had spent herself in

vain. She was dreadfully hurt and mortified and disappointed, and returned home so utterly downhearted, that if her husband had then returned from business, he would not have known what to make of her. But before he returned, a wonderful thing happened—Glen got the great pecuniary windfall of her literary career. It came from an editor, and it came in this wise.

When from any cause the circulation of a magazine, which has once been satisfactory, begins to drop, and goes on dropping till it really seems as if it could not drop much more, proprietors instantly begin to look out for ‘names.’ As a rule, the aid of authors possessed of names is invoked too late. The greatest physician is powerless to save a patient already moribund, and the writer is not in existence who could resuscitate a journal which has been permitted to sink into dotage. However, the persons connected with a then well-known magazine thought the time had come to spend a great deal of money to prevent the total loss of a larger sum still, and, casting about for suitable authors, they selected as likely resurrectionists the author of ‘Heron’s

Nest' and a male writer of great eminence, who had 'not produced too many books,' and who, it was well known, 'carried a large portion of the fashionable world with him.' Both authors were on the Burleigh Street list; to Burleigh Street, as if it were some sort of literary agency, application was made, and it occurred to the astute mind of Mr. Lancelot Felton that if he could 'place' a book by Lady Hilda Hilton instead of one by Mrs. Lacere, he might make a considerable pecuniary profit.

Had the firm owning the magazine alone been to deal with, Mr. Felton would have carried his point. He told them Mrs. Lacere was 'knocked up;' that she had done 'such a lot of work,' she wanted to 'have her shoes taken off and to be turned out for a while;' that his advice to her was 'not to write another line for a twelvemonth. Besides which,' he added, 'her books require to be read as a whole; the minute you begin to chop them up into portions, they lose all interest. No, take my word for it, Lady Hilda's your best card. She reads; Lord, how she reads! You'll have all the West-enders waiting for your magazine,

wondering who her ladyship's going to "pitch into" next. If I had a journal I would secure her at any price.'

'But isn't she a little—doubtful?' modestly suggested one of the firm. 'The press took exception to her last book, if I remember right, on the score of propriety.'

'As for that, she mightn't exactly satisfy the requirements of the Religious Tract Society or the *Saturday Review*,' returned Lance; 'but for all ordinary people and purposes she's right enough. You be advised by me—that is, if you want to send up your circulation. Run the pair I have chosen; they'll go well in harness—both showy, high stepping, credit to any establishment. Come, now, say Lady Hilda for the second novel, and we'll sign the agreement, and I'll send over the manuscripts.'

'I can't say "Yes" off-hand,' answered the gentleman who had on this occasion come to Burleigh Street, 'but I'll talk the matter over with my partners, and you shall hear from us very shortly.'

'Well?' queried Mr. Laplash, lounging into the office when the outer door closed after his visitor.

‘It’s as good as done.’

‘Thank God!’ murmured Zack piously.

But ere long Lance found experimentally the truth of that time-worn adage which declares ‘there’s many a slip ’twixt the cup and the lip,’ and Zack, spite of the liberal religious education vouchsafed him by Noll, decided he had uttered his thanksgiving prematurely. Indeed, when the news reached Burleigh Street of ‘Lacere’ having been ‘tampered with’ by that blank, blanked editor of that blanked magazine, Mr. Laplash felt there was very little left in this world to thank God for.

For, so far from saying she was ‘knocked up,’ Mrs. Lacere declared she would be only too glad to contribute the serial asked for; and to keep the matter in his own hands, and prevent a total loss to Burleigh Street as regarded the second novel required, Mr. Felton had to come out with the astounding offer of one thousand pounds for a new work from ‘Heron’s Nest,’ all rights to remain with him for the space of three years.

The sunshine of such success might well have dazzled the eyes of a man. As for Glen,

it simply blinded her. She did not see how nearly she had missed getting sixpence ; she failed to understand she had then reached her pecuniary zenith, and that for many a day afterwards her road would be all downhill.

And in actual life the downhill road is not an easy one, especially when the path nears the valley. Patience, O reader ! the pace quickens then—towards the last the descent is very rapid !

But it has been said the brilliant sunshine of that enormous success utterly blinded Glen-arva Lacere. It is not adversity which is the test of character, but prosperity ; and in the hour of her prosperity my heroine forgot the bitter past, and fancied of her own strength she had done this great thing—that for ever, hundreds and thousands of pounds would lie at her feet, only waiting her pleasure to stoop and pick them up ! Not for her the calculating wisdom which should stop to count sixpences and shillings—grudge pence to ragged lads who opened a carriage-door for her—shillings to cabmen—gratuities to servants.

Ah, Glen ! what a sorry fool you were to give so lavishly to those who could never pay

you back ! And yet I know not—perhaps you had the return somehow—in the friends who stood by you in time of trouble—in the memory that you had in your day helped the poor and needy ; that your charity was indeed without stint ; in the knowledge that in your darkest hour God did not leave you comfortless, but taught you moreover that while the day lasts there is work to be done in it ; that while life endures there is some one, whether sick or well, rich or poor, sorry or glad, to be made the happier because you were born.

For, after all, what is kindness but a coin ?

The great mistake some people make is that they regard it as an investment. They expect it back direct from the borrower with interest ; and when they fail to get it, talk of ingratitude.

What an error ! Speak a kind word, perform a kindly action, out of the abundant goodness of your heart, instead of the cool calculation of your head, and both are returned, not to-morrow by the recipients, but after many many morrows by some once far-away fellow-creature whom the kindly word has travelled on to touch, or the kindly action

benefited in a manner you can never trace, and who thus brings you back your own long-forgotten coin—not indeed with fair interest added, but multiplied a thousandfold !

‘ We’ll advertise you on every hoarding in London,’ said one of the partners of the great house, meeting Glen in Burleigh Street, when a solemn interview was appointed to arrange about the title of her new book.

Think of it—only think of it !

Let the reader cast a backward glance along the course of this story to the night when Glenarva Westley traced her future career upon the track of the moonbeams she saw reflected in a moonlit sea, and say if this were not success, what should be required to compass it ?

In her very early days of authorship—long before she travelled in company with Mr. Bernard Kelly to London—writing in that room which overlooked billows tossing down from the wild Atlantic, Glen in an oft-rejected manuscript asked one of these questions at which publishers and editors, when they saw her, were apt to smile irreverently ; namely, ‘ What is Fame ?’

An exceedingly difficult question even for maturity to answer; but Glen, rushing in with the fearless and intemperate ardour which characterizes young people as well as fools, at once proceeded to solve the problem for herself. Fame, she declared, was a bubble, a breath, and so forth.

Pity she had not in her hour of triumph looked up some of the old-faded writing, and asked herself if she believed there was a word of truth in the lines traced so carefully in the ink that had turned so brown; and if there were, laid it to heart.

It was about this time Mr. Kelly, whose Review was now an established success, and a great power in literature, stopped to read one of the huge posters on which Mrs. Logan-Lacere's name was placarded in the face of London.

'Humph!' thought Barney, and he proceeded thoughtfully on his way. When he returned home, he sat down and wrote a stinging article, entitled 'Fame and Notoriety.' His contention was that the moment an author came prominently before the public he

compassed Notoriety—that the author's work alone was capable of securing Fame.

From out of the treasure-house of the past he produced name after name to prove his point. The books of men considered great in their day, he said, were forgotten; while the works of men who had been thought of small account, little regarded by their contemporaries, unknown to fashion, disregarded by society, were, though the men themselves had mouldered into dust, quick and living still.

It was an excellent paper, to which Barney brought all the resources of his extraordinary range of reading—his caustic powers of perception—his epigrammatic style.

The week it appeared, everybody went about asking everybody else: 'Have you read "Fame and Notoriety" in *The Dragon*? Capital, isn't it?'

Mrs. Lacere read it, of course, and was not much convinced.

'Those that win may laugh,' she said to Mr. Edward Beattie, who, having arrived on a visit to England from Canada, was literally stricken dumb to find what Mrs Lacere had

done—the strides she had made—how rich, prosperous, almost fashionable, she had grown !

Ned was taken to parties of all sorts, till he craved piteously for rest.

‘My dear Glen,’ he remarked, ‘it has constantly been dinned into me that women are stronger than men ; but I never believed that statement till now. There is no man who could do what you do. Let us stop quietly at home, just for variety.’

And again he said before he left :

‘I hope, Glen, you are not spending all your money, but putting something by.’

‘I am putting most of it into the business,’ she answered.

‘And that is all right, I suppose ?’

‘Oh yes,’ she said easily ; though, indeed, she knew as little about how the business was going, as of what she was spending.





CHAPTER IX.

BOUND TO COME.

‘**W**ELL, Kelly, I hope you approve of your portrait in *The Wasp*?’

Though still early in the forenoon, Mr. Felton, who put the foregoing question, had evidently already partaken of what he called a ‘pick-up,’ and Barney accordingly scarcely knew how to take his inquiry.

‘I have not seen it,’ he answered.

‘Ah! then you have a treat in store. There were half a dozen copies lying about the office, but they’ve all been carried off. Noll, just run round the corner and see if you can get one.’

‘I wouldn’t, Lance, if I was you,’ expostulated Noll, resorting to his favourite formula ;

while Zack, with a saturnine grin, muttered it was 'too bad ;' adding, upon his conscience, 'Lance was a good sort of fellow to help a lame dog over a style.'

'It's something not very complimentary then, I presume,' said Mr. Kelly, who felt these various remarks did not augur a flattering likeness.

'Oh ! that's just as you choose to take it,' answered Lance airily, 'but perhaps you won't be able to get a copy. I know the paper is selling as fast as it can be machined.'

'I'd better try to secure one then, before the proprietors stop printing,' suggested Barney ironically, for it was well known the sale of *The Wasp* was not equal to its merits.

'All right ; I'm sure you'll be pleased,' was Mr. Felton's comforting remark, as he beheld Mr. Kelly depart. 'He'll not let grass grow under his feet, I warrant,' added the publisher, speaking to his partner and the ever-present Noll, whereupon the three laughed in concert.

'I wish there had been a copy here,' said Mr. Laplash ; 'I'd have given a sovereign to

see his face when he saw the "young man in his native bogs."

'Oh! the wife's the thing,' exclaimed Mr. Felton.

'It is a shame, though,' remarked Noll; 'I don't think such personal matters should be permitted.'

'Why, hang it, man!' cried Lance, '*The Wasp's* no more personal than *The Dragon*. What are you dreaming about?'

Meanwhile Barney was speeding along the Strand to get a copy of the paper in which he guessed he was to form the staple of amusement for that week, and as he went he anathematized the whole race of authors, editors, publishers, ay, and even readers. Hitherto matters had gone with him so smoothly! His paper was the great success of the period. Since the *Saturday Review* nothing had appeared which took the public so utterly by storm. 'Kill and spare not' might have been his motto. Wherever there was sin, wherever there was folly, wherever there was even amiable weakness, he went down and slew. About him he had gathered a small but brilliant staff of unknown writers—

writers indeed so utterly unknown that they were not merely unfamiliar to the world, but would have been strange to each other had the men happened to meet.

From the early and best days of the *Saturday*, Mr. Kelly had taken a leaf. The outsiders, the dark horses, he brought in to win. *The Dragon* represented, indeed, a new Cave of Adullam: for 'everyone [with brains] who was in distress, and everyone that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him, and he was a captain over them.'

Only consider the possible result—capital to pay—a mind to direct—the element of secrecy! From chambers, the occupants of which had never been gladdened with a brief; from parsonages preferment seemed to shun; from men who only looked at the great world afar off, in whose mirrors were not stuck the cards of milord and milady; from 'medical practitioners,' who had sufficient brains to question the wisdom of the great guns of the profession, and could hit off neatly all the humbug of the craft—Barney gathered together his weekly instalments, heretofore without a

word being said in his disparagement ; but now—good heavens ! now what had come ? As he rushed on his career he saw at a news-vendor's a copy of *The Wasp* prominently displayed.

He went in and bought it. One glance was enough. His enemy had found him. His turn had come, and alas ! Mr. Bernard Kelly could not face ridicule and criticism with the unmoved front displayed by 'Heron's Nest.' To quote Mr. Lance Felton, she 'had not winked an eyelid' over the most adverse criticism ; but she—she—what was anything Mrs. Lacere ever faced in comparison with this awful thing Mr. Kelly carried in his pocket as he ascended the editorial stairs in Paternoster Row ?

Mr. Kelly's paper was far too strong and too respectable to be illustrated. *The Wasp* was so disreputable that it felt pen and ink weak unless aided by pencil. Conjoined, literature and art might have done anything, had not the manager, moved one night by some singular freak, gone off with everything he could lay hands on, except his wife. He took all the cash, though he did not take her.

When he departed, many thousand pounds departed too. Really, the whole affair was touching. To quote Mr. Donagh :

‘The miscreant proved himself a ruffian of the deepest dye.’

But this catastrophe happened long after the appearance of that awful representation of Barney’s career. There he was first in his ‘native bogs’—finally in the editorial chair. He saw himself turned out of Sulby Park with fifty pounds in his pocket—arriving, carpet-bag in hand, at the gate of Mat Donagh’s house, or, as the letterpress in old English letters described the scene :

‘Ye goode yonge mann is receyved by hys frend.’

The brown coat, uncut hair, generally unkempt appearance of Mr. Bernard Kelly’s earliest London days were reproduced to a nicety. No need of any wizard to tell Barney who had supplied the materials for these sketches. There was but one man in the whole of the metropolis competent to instruct an artist as to the former *personnel* of the now successful editor—Matthew Donagh. He had kept his pebble ready in the sling all

these years, and now he slang it with such unerring aim that Barney, social giant though he might be, felt the stone enter his forehead, and strike his pride and vanity to the earth.

At that moment there was murder in Mr. Kelly's heart. Had the irrepressible Mat stood before him in the flesh, he could have killed him with pleasure—ay, and have faced the certainty of hanging afterwards.

There was no part of his career in which that wretched print failed to hold him up to ridicule. Receiving his rejected addresses from the hands of supercilious clerks; standing disconsolate in St. James's Park; 'liquor-ing up' with the younger Dawtons; acting with the father of that clever family in 'How's Maria?'—the veteran wearing an impossible wig, the traditional hessians, a white waistcoat, and a swallow-tailed coat—no single incident he could have wished forgotten but was recalled to memory. And, worst and cruellest of all, his wife was pressed into the service, and in one deliciously airy illustration was depicted as seated on a sack stuffed full of bank-notes; while Barney, standing before her with hand pressed to his heart,

watched out of the corner of one eye a group of young girls vanishing in the background, some crying, some laughing as they left him alone with an old hag who bore a terrible likeness to the widow of Robert Underwood, groom.

In the very last scene he was depicted in the editorial chair, haughtily waving away would-be contributors.

He laid down the paper. He could have wept with rage and mortification. He had known no mercy ; he had smote hip and thigh. He had spared no man, he had been tender to no woman. Success only rendered him pitiless ; and now his enemy had found and taken him by the beard and thrust a spear under his fifth rib, and inflicted a wound which, if not unto death, would never, he knew, heal while life lasted.

Yes ; he had better have made terms with Mat.

‘ Politeness,’ observed that gentleman to him on the occasion of their last interview—when Mr. Donagh offered his services in the way of ‘ conciliating advertisers for a mere nominal sum ’—‘ costs little, and may, upon the whole,

be regarded as a remarkably good investment. You, Bernard Kelly, Esquire—ha! it really makes one laugh when one recalls the bog-trotting Barney, of Callinacoan—have been pleased to despise the proffered services of a man who, at least, never forfeited his self-esteem by catering for the lowest tastes of the lowest public, and marrying an old woman for the sake of lucre. You have also—as if Matthew Donagh, the descendant of Irish kings, were a dog!—flung me a twenty-pound note in settlement of all claims upon you. I take your twenty-pound note, sir, in settlement; but there is a debt I owe you which shall be paid, never fear. “I wait,” is my motto; and I can wait. The doomed hour may be deferred, but it will strike; when it does, remember Matthew Donagh.’

Yes, he had waited, and the hour was striking even then. There was nothing clumsy in the blow; it went straight home. The sketches and the letterpress must have been the work of time and of cool deliberation. Barney writhed as he thought of the shrieks of laughter amidst which the narrative of ‘Ye Goode Yonge Mann’s Progress toe Successe’

must have been written, and the way in which his wife's peculiarities were noted, possibly at some party where she thought she was exciting admiration.

If tearing his hair out by the roots could have done him any good, he would have torn it; if thrashing Donagh within an inch of his life could have remedied the evil, Mat had earned no commissions for many a month to come; if law, or money, or courage, or diplomacy could have availed to remedy the evil, Barney had not been heart-broken. But he was wise enough to know his best chance lay in laughing the matter off; and it is not easy to laugh when a man's soul is wrung by ridicule, when he fails to see any fun in caricature, when he feels he has not on earth a real friend who will be sorry for his downfall.

Curiously enough, there recurred to him at that moment the image of Glenarva, as in her poor second-best attire she sat opposite to him in the railway carriage. He had not been generous to her—would she be delighted with this attack?

He did not think it. He had heard enough,

at all events, of Mr. Lacere to know he would feel indignant at the introduction of a woman's name in such a connection.

The blame of men like Messrs. Felton and Laplash is the truest praise ; and he felt sure that even if Glen, like most of her sex, lacked chivalry, she could not have been the wife of so true a man without at all events acquiring some of that lore which does not seem to benefit its possessor much here, but which, perhaps for that very reason, we may fain hope will prove of inestimable use hereafter.

‘She could not help learning some good from her father and husband,’ he considered ; ‘I wish I had not been so hard upon her, and yet she wanted a lesson.’

So had he, for that matter ; but now it was given he did not feel grateful.

Supposing his wife saw *The Wasp*. Good heavens ! She was so quick, that even without any friendly instruction she would understand the whole story at a glance. It was most unlikely she should chance to see the paper, but still, to guard against contingencies, Mr. Kelly felt he had better at once take her out of town. Nevertheless, he hesitated ;

and, hesitating, he turned over the leaves of *The Wasp*.

Then, what was the first thing that met his eye, under the heading 'Literature' ! A sweet likeness of Mrs. Lacere, looking prettier than any human being had ever beheld her, hanging in a manuscript, labelled with the name of the journal to which she was contributing. A minute previously his heart had felt softened towards 'Heron's Nest,' but now, with a muttered curse, he closed the page, and feeling it better he should be seen out that day, walked westward.

'For those money-bags and the girls vanishing in the distance would play the very deuce,' he considered ; as, indeed, when he got home he found they had played. Some devoted friend, not to be behind-hand when a good work was in progress, had kindly sent Mrs. Kelly *The Wasp*, with the objectionable article marked ; the consequence being an attack of hysterics, the doctor, retirement to her own room, and a scene with Barney, the details of which he never cared subsequently to recall.

Mr. Matthew Donagh had waited to some

purpose, but his laugh cost him first and last a larger sum than he could possibly have anticipated.

After all, revenge is not a cheap luxury, more particularly when a man who has to earn his living pits himself against a person pecuniarily independent of the world. There came a day when he wanted to 'borrow' five shillings from Barney, and did not succeed in the endeavour.

'You'd better have let him alone, Mat dear,' said Miss Cavan; 'ye know well enough there never was a Kelly yet but could sting like a nettle.'

It was about this time Mrs. Lacere began to understand Mr. Felton was in some difficulty. He had always been somewhat communicative to her about his troubles, and she now gathered, from the constant repetition of a remark to the effect that 'money was tight, deuced tight,' the publisher found pecuniary pressure uncomfortable. On his table he kept a basket of unpaid accounts, which seemed to grow fuller and fuller.

'I never look at one of them,' he said frankly, 'till I have the cash to pay, and

then I just take the first that turns up or is asked for.'

'It is a great trouble examining and adding up bills,' sighed Glen, whose arithmetical acquirements were no greater than those usually possessed by her sex.

'It is such a trouble it would never pay me to do either one or the other,' retorted Lance. 'Time is far too precious to be wasted in totting up pence and halfpence.'

Mrs. Lacere did not say anything, but she thought a great deal. Like most persons incapable of wrestling successfully with figures, she had immense faith in 'keeping accounts.'

'I wonder how in the world he manages his business,' she marvelled—a wonder which was not decreased by a subsequent statement of Mr. Felton's to the effect that 'his bank-book told him how much money he received, and he knew his creditors would take precious good care to tell him how much he owed.'

Nevertheless, spite of the extreme simplicity of his book-keeping arrangements, Lance was certainly beginning to find the shoe pinch, and, so far as she was able, Glen felt sorry for him.

Just about that period she often felt as though her brain refused to answer to the calls she made upon it—as though there were some closed door between her thoughts and the power which enabled her to give expression to them. She was not ill—oh no! not in the least. Nevertheless, she could not but be conscious now and then of a curious cloud which seemed to envelop her understanding. Words slipped away from memory; ideas, if not instantly written down, were difficult to reproduce; unless she took her mind firmly in hand, and shook it, she failed to arouse the faculty of attention. She suffered from a continual headache, not severe, but strange; if she tried to recall the events of yesterday, they seemed to loom upon her from a distance through a fog. How then was she to see that there was something amiss with her husband? Poring over her own work, which now occupied her about three times as long as it ought to have done, how could she be expected to take note of his work and his hours, when days full of labour were becoming blank to her?

All this time she looked well and seemed strong. No one, not even Mr. Lacere, sus-

pected there was anything wrong with her health.

Curiously enough, Mr. Kelly was the first person who noticed how exceedingly strange Mrs. Lacere was looking. At the special request of Mr. Felton, she had driven over to a party, 'likely,' in Lance's phrase, 'to do her good.'

Afterwards, Glen could not have told for a certainty whether she entered the room in the ordinary way, or on her head. The lights seemed dim, the cloud grew darker, her disinclination to talk increased—it was an effort to her to speak the few words she uttered—the Society conversation appeared to her meaningless.

One great reviewer said he never recollected to have seen a bouquet so exquisitely arranged as that she carried, and, in a sort of dream, Glen remembered she had walked through the greenhouse, and culled and arranged the blossoms for herself. A noted editor asked if she could contribute some papers, and begged her to appoint a time for an interview; but afterwards she could not recollect what she said in answer, and knew if she had

met him in the street she would have failed to recognise his features.

She heard great singers—singing as if they stood afar off; women and men she knew were all around her, yet they did not seem near. Suddenly there came upon her a yearning desire to get away from it all, to rid herself of the sound of voices; and pushing aside a curtain, she found herself in a little anteroom, which chanced at that moment to be quite empty. It was cooler there. Through a second door leading into the hall there came every now and then a rush of fresh night air, and with a sigh of relief, Glen dropped into an easy-chair beside the table, and tried to gather together her wandering wits.

‘These long distances and hot rooms do not suit me,’ she considered dreamily. ‘I wish I had not come;’ and in a feeble, purposeless sort of fashion she was wondering how she could best retire from the scene, when some one just at her elbow asked:

‘Are you not well, Mrs. Lacere?’

Lifting her eyes, she beheld Mr. Kelly.

‘Quite well, thank you, but tired.’

‘Then why on earth don’t you go home?’

‘That is precisely what I am thinking,’ she answered ; and then, ceasing to fan herself, with a weary gesture she leaned her head back, while her glance roamed over the pattern of the carpet, as though it held the solution of the enigma.

Barney looked at her doubtfully.

‘May I speak a few very plain words to you ?’ he asked.

‘If you like.’

‘Why do you drag about to these places ? Why do you let Felton persuade you to accept invitations I am sure you would much rather refuse ? You are killing yourself ; and what is perhaps of more consequence, you are killing such genius as God gave you. In Heaven’s name—when you find no pleasure in society, and it is impossible to look in your face and imagine you do—why don’t you stay at home and write your books, or else rest body and mind, that you may write better hereafter ?’

‘I am sure I don’t know,’ she answered, a little surprised at the force and bluntness of his address. ‘People say it is better not to shut one’s self up, but to mix with the world.’

‘People say !’ he repeated contemptuously,

‘who are the people that talk such nonsense? Idle people, foolish people, rich people, strong people.’

‘I come under the second category, I suppose,’ she smiled.

‘If I said I thought you were wise, I should be more polite than truthful,’ he replied, smiling too. ‘But seriously, Mrs. Lacere, is it not a pity for you to allow yourself to be led so far out of the direct road by that mere abstraction ‘they say’? When you can’t write any more, do you suppose Society will settle a fixed income on you? When your health is broken, will it find a physician able to cure?’

‘But why,’ demanded Glen, recovering her spirits a little, and, under the surprise of this unexpected attack, rallying her scattered energies to do battle against the immaculate Barney, ‘should visiting—and I now visit very little—unfit me for writing? Why should an hour or two of social intercourse ruin my health? Others go out night after night and day after day—why not I? Others find mixing with their fellows stimulate their energies and give them fresh ideas. What is there so

exceptional in my organization that where others lead I may not follow ?

‘Have you a headache ?’ asked Barney, instead of replying to this series of questions. As she spoke he noticed she passed her hand across her brow, a habit which had latterly become involuntary.

‘I have always a headache,’ she answered pettishly ; ‘but that is of no consequence. Tell me why I alone should stay at home while all the rest of the world goes gadding?’

‘I could give you some very good reasons, Mrs. Lacere,’ said Barney, ‘but this is neither the time nor place for stating them. Let me instead get you something to eat ; you look quite worn out.’

‘Thank you ; I do not want anything, except to get home. I wonder what the time is.’

‘I dare say your coachman is somewhere about the house. Shall I tell him you wish to leave ?’

‘Oh, if you would !’ exclaimed Glen. And the mist seemed to close around her once more, and the cloud to come nearer and

nearer; for the short-lived excitement had died out, like a ray of winter sunshine, leaving all things darker than before.

‘I will explain matters to our hostess,’ said Barney, as he handed Mrs. Lacere to her carriage, ‘and we will resume our discussion on some future occasion.’

But it so chanced the discussion was never resumed. For a short time Glen fought bravely against the mist which stupefied and the cloud that blinded her; but there came at length a morning when she was forced to return to bed and stop there. Then after a few days she got up and set to work turning out copy once more. She could not go on, however; hand and head both refused their office.

It is but a step from Fame to Failure—as it is sometimes, according to medical testimony, but the ‘sixteenth of an inch’ from life to death.

The same hoardings, the same blank walls which had been placarded with the bills announcing in huge letters: ‘New Novel, by the author of “Heron’s Nest,”’ now told all the world and his wife that ‘in consequence of

Mrs. Lacere's dangerous illness her new serial *was suspended.*'

'I knew it must come,' said Mr. Kelly to Mr. Vassett; 'I felt as certain she would break down as I do that Felton will go smash.'





CHAPTER X.

WHAT HAPPENED.

MR. FELTON was one of those persons concerning whom it is eminently unsafe to venture prophecies. While Glen was lying in enforced idleness looking with a great horror death straight in the face, and Mr. Kelly in confidential talk with Mr. Vassett expressing his conviction that the Burleigh Street bubble would soon burst, Lance, on his own account and quite independent of Mr. Laplash, was negotiating for the purchase of one of the largest publishing businesses in London. His intentions were as simple as his book-keeping. He meant to leave 'Zack' in Burleigh Street, and to take all his best authors with him. All

‘trumpery pecuniary details’ he left to the consideration of those who were going to find the wherewithal for the great experiment. Whether Mr. Laplash was pleased or angry seemed to him a matter of indifference.

‘If you think,’ he said, ‘I am going to be hampered in a big concern, as I have been in a little, with your petty notions, you are very much mistaken.’

‘But you can’t throw me over in a minute this way,’ cried his partner, almost weeping.

‘No ; but I’ll just get rid of you as soon as ever I can,’ retorted Lance.

‘Remember whose money it was started the firm.’

‘Pooh !’ said Mr. Felton, ‘what is the good of talking about that, when you know when we started we had but eight pounds ten between us ?’

‘And eight pounds five of that was mine.’

‘And all the brains mine,’ added Lance.

‘Come, now, I wouldn’t, if I were you, either of you,’ suggested Mr. Butterby, thinking the period had arrived when he might put in his oar with advantage. ‘Least said about

that, by either of you, soonest mended. I don't hold with bounce and lies and that sort of thing, but still there is no need to tell the whole of your affairs in the street. Don't fret yourself, Zack; if an equitable arrangement is come to, you'll be far safer and more comfortable here doing a quiet little profitable trade by yourself; and as for Lance, let him take his great swells and big authors, and much good may they do him!

'There's one thing I'll not take, I'll swear!' exclaimed Lance, pale with passion—'and that's you; and if I catch you hanging about the other office as you have been hanging about this, I'll give you in charge, that's all.'

'Only hark to him!' said Noll, with saintly composure. 'There's gratitude! Who'd think he owes everything he possesses on earth to me?'

'I owe nothing to you,' shouted Lance, in rejoinder, 'except a debt I'll take precious good care to pay you in meal or in malt. D—— your impudence! do you think I'm such a simpleton as not to know you thought to use me as a tool—that you imagined I was so hard up that I'd go touching my hat to you

for the chance of earning a few shillings a week? You never meant me to get on—never. You'd have kept my nose to the grindstone for the term of my natural life, if you'd had your way. And where would you have been but for me, I'd like to know? Where would you have got your roomy house at Peckham, and that terrace up at Kentish Town, and the freehold cottages out Molesey way? Faith, if every rogue had his deserts, you'd be living rent free in a plainer and more substantial residence than Garden Villa, and have to put up with more frugal fare than you sit down to now.'

'I wouldn't, Lance,' said Mr. Butterby, who had with blanched face kept turning his head round during the progress of this remarkable address to see if anyone entered the outer office, while Mr. Laplash averted his countenance to hide the smile with which he could not help greeting Lance's utterances. 'Now I wouldn't really, if I were you.'

'If you don't quit that parrot-cry I'll brain you!' declared Mr. Felton; and as he laid his hand on the inkstand he looked so exceedingly like carrying his threat into execution without

waiting for further provocation, that 'more in sorrow than in anger,' Mr. Butterby sauntered out of the office and into the street.

'If you can't keep him from drink he'll cut all our throats one of these days,' observed Noll to Laplash, when subsequently talking the interview over with him; whereupon Mr. Laplash, with a mighty oath, affirmed he didn't care whose throat Lance cut as long as he'd give him (Zack) a share in the new business.

'Now don't you take to swearing also,' remonstrated Mr. Butterby: 'it's a wrong, and a foolish, and an—an unnecessary habit,' finished Noll, who, in addition to his other accomplishments, being an open-air preacher, sometimes indulged in a little redundancy of expression.

'It may be,' said Mr. Laplash, 'but I fancy if you'd much to do with Lance, you would find ordinary language quite incapable of conveying your feelings. To think, after how I've worked, that I should be pitched over in this fashion!' and he relieved his overcharged heart by uttering another malediction, which caused Noll to shake his sleek head in horror.

As Mr. Felton knew money belonging to other people would have to pay for the privilege of 'securing' Mrs. Lacere for the new business, it goes almost without saying that overtures were in due time made to Glen for a new book.

Still ill, still finding the completion of the novel already in hand a weary labour, Mr. Felton's pet novelist did not greet the prospect of getting hard to work again with that delight he could have wished to see.

'Come,' he urged, 'you must not give way, you know. What will become of us all if you are laid on the shelf? You ought to have been guided by me, and not undertaken this serial; and I am beginning to think Kelly's right, and a quiet life is the thing to suit a woman who goes in for your line of writing. I don't mean to say this last thing is not very good, and has not taken, for if I did, I should be stating an untruth; but still it is not you. Now, sit down and write me a book like "Ash Tree" or "Due East," and we'll not quarrel about terms.'

It had come to this. After all the trouble and turmoil and hurry, the mad haste to turn

out copy, and the wild and expensive chase after fresh ideas and new pastures, she was asked to return to the modest plan and simple style which had won her early success, and out of the solid, if apparently unattractive materials of old, build up a story which, by its utter absence of all art, should again rivet the public, and inspire the eager interest and keen curiosity of old.

‘ Mr. Felton might as well tell me to go back and be a girl again,’ thought Glen ; but she had either learnt enough wisdom not to contradict the publisher’s fancy, or else felt too tired to argue the matter with him. So she agreed to do all she could to produce a satisfactory work, mentioning at the same time it was impossible for her to commence anything fresh till she got strong again.

‘ But now you’ve turned your corner you will soon be strong,’ he said eagerly ; ‘ and don’t let yourself down and think you are worse than you are. Look at me. Bless you, if I was to begin to consider finger-aches and not feeling up to the mark, and the rest of it, I might never show in Burleigh Street at all. Get away for a few weeks. Take your writing

with you. Why, down in some quiet place by the sea you ought to get a lot of inspiration. Margate, now—that's not very quiet, to be sure ; but you needn't ever feel dull there. It's all nonsense your moping about home. Tell your maid to put up your things and start off—that's the plan ; and if you want money, let Lacere come up to me. I dare say between us we'll manage enough to pay your lodging. Very likely I'll take a run down and see how you are getting on myself.'

With which cheering assurance Mr. Felton took his leave.

In all her life there had never been a time when Mrs. Lacere felt less inclined to 'go somewhere for a change.' She had lain still and looked at death ; in the watches of the night she had reviewed her life, and found small satisfaction in the retrospect. This was her first pause in the race since that evening when she turned her steps toward Burleigh Street, and she was as reluctant now to enter the course again as she had been then to wend her way back to Mr. Vassett to ask him for the manuscript of 'Heron's Nest.'

What better was she for all the prizes she

had won—all the money she had earned—all the people she had seen—all the flattery, all the praise which once seemed so sweet ?

How much better—nay, rather, how much worse ! If no one knew the fact, Glen was fully aware she had not done herself justice, that she owned higher capabilities than, so far as it now seemed, the world was ever likely to wot of.

The old, old story over again—acting in haste, repenting at leisure ! What a good thing she might have made of life for herself and other people if she had only been wise, she thought, as night after night she lay watching with tired eyes for the grey dawn of another weary day ; and now life seemed over. Even if she got better, she felt there was little worth living for. As Ned Beattie would have said plainly, she wanted something to cry for ; and it was not long ere that something came. So far, events had moved but slowly ; now they followed swift one on the heels of another.

‘Don’t you think it strange,’ she said to her husband on a certain night, nearly three weeks after the day when she promised to write a book

as nearly on the old pattern as she could, 'that Mr. Felton does not send on the agreement? He seemed in such haste when he was here, and I never remember his being so long in what he calls "clinching" an affair before.'

'He has been ill,' answered Mr. Lacere, after an almost imperceptible pause.

'Ill? When did you hear?'

'To-day—this evening. Just before I left town.'

'What has been the matter?'

'I don't know.'

'Is he better?'

'Yes—no—the truth is, Glen——'

'What is the truth, dear? Why don't you go on? Is there any danger?' And then, without waiting for an answer, she cried out, 'He is dead!' and sat silent—stunned.

'Are you sure?' she inquired at last.

'Quite. I went down to Burleigh Street to inquire. Poor fellow! with all his faults, there was a great deal of good about him.'

'What a dreadful thing!' said Glen, still almost stupefied.

'I did not intend to tell you anything about it to-night,' said Mr. Lacere.

‘I am thankful you did,’ she declared. ‘It would have been terrible to hear me going on talking about the agreement when you know he could never send it. Do you remember how often he used to say he would not live long?’

‘It is the unexpected which always happens,’ commented Barney, when he heard the news. ‘I certainly did not think this was what would occur;’ and so in all manner of ways the changes were rung throughout London on Lance Felton’s death. Even before the man was buried, the literary world seemed to proceed much on its way as usual. He did not appear to be missed by a certain set, as might have been expected. Save that he was not to be seen there, things in Burleigh Street went on apparently as heretofore. The postman delivered letters, which Mr. Laplash opened; people paid money, which Mr. Laplash banked; collectors called for books, and got them, just as though the busy brain which had built up so astonishing a business was not at rest. Noll lounged in and out as formerly. Except that Mr. Laplash now sat in Lance’s special arm-chair, and devoted himself to correspondence,

and saw authors, and answered questions as one having authority, there was nothing to show the mainspring of the concern was broken, that Lancelot Felton would never again make a bargain, or crow over other publishers, or blow a trumpet about his 'big' authors, or thrust his subscription list under Mr. Vassett's unwilling nose, or point to the long string of good names in the *Athenæum*, which had filled the souls of 'slow-going old coaches' with envy and dismay.

It had been a short life, but in reality not a merry one. The steam was always at high-pressure; but perhaps nobody, save Mr. Felton himself, knew the cargo of care he carried adown the stream with such apparent ease and jauntiness, and at such an express speed.

In a word, Lancelot Felton having, as his partner expressed the matter, died of 'drought' (there were those who said his sudden exit was due to quite an opposite cause), Mr. Laplash remained, so far as pecuniary matters permitted, master of the position. He inaugurated his reign by serving writs on all those authors who were not 'up to time' with their manu-

scripts. 'Lance had made advances and received no equivalent,' so the new head of the firm stated, 'and he was determined to put things on a different footing'—which, indeed, he very soon did.

The process was simple, but effectual. He drove away almost every writer of reputation, and he found himself the possessor of perhaps a number of the worst manuscripts which were ever at one time showered in upon a publisher.

As it is not easy to procure good 'copy,' even if all the conditions for producing it are favourable, the quality turned out under pressure of a writ may be imagined.

Nevertheless, it was copy capable of being printed, with a good name on the title-page; and Mr. Laplash, having thus 'got in his debts' and 'weeded' his lists, turned his attention to doing what he called a safe trade. He began this safe trade by cutting down authors' prices, and economizing in advertising. When he published a work by a known writer, he trusted to the name of the writer selling the edition.

It was a suicidal policy for himself, and one

which would have been death to authors had they stayed long enough with the Burleigh Street Solomon to be killed by this novel treatment ; but, as a rule, they were sufficiently wise speedily to betake themselves elsewhere.

For a while Mr. Laplash garnered golden grain. He reaped that which others had planted ; his barns were full to overflowing ; he felt jubilant ; he extolled his own tactics, and regarded the wisdom of all the great publishers as folly.

But a day came when he perceived there was not much of a harvest ripening for him. Little seed had been cast into the ground since Lance Felton's death, and he could now count the stalks of wheat in his field, so few were they. Then he and 'Noll' laid their heads together, and initiated the plan since successfully followed by so many 'strictly conscientious' firms, of making amateurs pay for their whistle.

'Why shouldn't they?' said Mr. Butterby. 'If a man wants to learn a trade, he has to pay a premium.'

Which was all very well, only in his zeal

for his friend's interest Mr. Butterby forgot that the wealth of Rothschild could not confer genius or even talent. And if he had remembered this, it would not have much mattered, since it was rather pecuniary profit to Mr. Laplash than success to would-be authors which was desired.

Be very sure that in Burleigh Street the bitter pill was smothered in jam instead of being thrust nakedly before the sight in the honest practical way wherewith Mr. Vassett still chills the enthusiasm of rising genius.

‘If you want a brougham,’ he observes, with a candour that is not cruel, though it may seem so, ‘you have to pay for it. If you wish to appear in print, you must find the money. I fail to see sufficient merit in your manuscript to justify my spending capital upon it; and, indeed, to be quite candid, I should prefer you to take your novel elsewhere.’

Which was exactly what ‘rising genius did,’ though now, judging from the many, many failures in the book trade, ‘lords and ladies, widows and orphans, clergymen and others,’ are beginning to pause ere sending cheques

or handing over their careful savings, their little all, to any Dick, Tom, or Harry who chooses to add the magic word 'publisher' after his name.

The glamour of success with which Mr. Felton had invested his firm still enveloped Burleigh Street, and it proved no difficult matter to change the whole order of things, and get authors willing to pay for having their books brought out instead of being paid for writing them. Mr. Laplash felt delighted.

'Ah!' he said to Mr. Butterby, whom he liked to have hanging about his office, on the same principle that a devotee believes in the efficacy of any relic which once belonged to some sinful old saint, 'if poor Lance had only thought less of his authors and more of himself, he might have been living now, and a rich man, too.'

Mr. Butterby shook his head, as if in grave and mournful assent; but he thought had Lance's brains been of no better quality than his partner's there would have been no business to talk of, and no authors worth mentioning.

'Felton had some appreciation of literature,'

observed one irate individual, in whose breast that invitation of 'Victoria by the grace of God' was still rankling, 'but this fellow is a mere tradesman. He looks on a book as a baker would on a roll.'

'No, he doesn't,' answered a friend, 'for a baker would like his roll to be of a good quality, and it is perfectly immaterial to Laplash what the book is, so long as it puts money in his pocket.'

Mr. Felton's authors felt very sore indeed at the doings of the new potentate, and quoted in a bitter and satirical way the words of Rehoboam, and applied the retort of the Children of Israel to Mr. Laplash, most of them at the same time leaving Burleigh Street.

But Mr. Laplash did not care. He said he was very glad to get rid of them, that the firm had 'lost lots of money' over their books; and that for his part, from the first he entered an earnest though unavailing protest against the ridiculous sums paid for 'mere names.'

'Well, that was how Felton made the business, at any rate,' remarked Mr. Kelly, who

felt somewhat indignant at the sudden change of policy, and the mud so freely thrown on Lance's memory.

'Humph! a nice business,' grunted Mr. Laplash.

'You ought not to disparage it, at any rate,' urged Barney. 'You had your share of the profits, no doubt.'

'There never were any profits.'

'Well, then, your share of the "debts"' retorted the other.

Mr. Laplash stared at him for a moment. Before turning on his heel he said shortly, and with a sort of snarl:

'I don't know what you mean.'

The sole partner was now a great man. People toadied and tried to propitiate him. He was asked out to dinner and to fashionable parties. If little Miss Green wanted to add to her income, she asked her dear aunt or cousin, Lady So-and-So, to show Mr. Laplash some attention; and Mr. Laplash, laughing at them all in his sleeve, was good enough to accept their attentions, and tell in his 'delightfully brusque way' the sums of money his firm had paid authors, and the 'great hit'

such and such books had been. Then the family resources were tried, and little Miss Green paid down a given amount, and forthwith expected to make her fortune.

Anybody might have thought in those days literature was a lottery in which there were no blanks, so eagerly did people flock to take tickets for fame in Burleigh Street.

Intoxicated by the rush of moneyed amateurs knocking, with lordly cheques in their hands, at the door of his temple, Mr. Laplash suffered himself to become captious and somewhat insolent to the unfortunate persons he 'employed' who expected money for 'their work.' It was necessary to keep a few good names on his lists in order to 'draw' amateurs, but he took care to 'teach them their true position' and 'take down their notions of their own importance.'

'Things ain't as they used to be,' he was wont to say. 'Authors will never get what they did again. There are such a deuce of a lot of you, the market's spoiled. A publisher can't bring out more than a certain number of books;' and then he would offer some ridiculous sum, finishing off with the civil remark:

'I never read one of you. I don't know

whether your book is good or bad. I only know that you'll sell—that is all concerns me.'

In a moment of forgetfulness he said something of this sort to Mr. Kelly, who answered, he thought authors had better turn their attention to some way of earning an honest penny.

'I am sure I wish most of them would,' replied Mr. Laplash, lounging easily down the outer office after Barney: 'as for your matter, I am willing to give you what I said, though I don't know if I shall ever see my money back again.'

'You are very kind, I am sure,' replied the author, in a white heat of rage, which quite escaped Mr. Laplash's observation, as he proceeded to ask in a friendly way:

'How's your old woman?'

'*Sir!*' said Barney.

'How's your *young* woman, then?' persisted Mr. Laplash, who regarded this mode of asking after a wife as a delightful pleasantry.

Mr. Kelly did not answer. Without speaking a word, he strode out into the street, Mr. Laplash staring after his retreating figure in amazement.

‘You’ve gone and done it this time,’ observed Mr. Butterby. ‘I told you before I wouldn’t, if I was you.’

Next day a messenger arrived with Mr. Kelly’s compliments, and he should be obliged by the return of his manuscript. Now it happened that Mr. Laplash did not want to quarrel with the great man, so ‘Noll’ was despatched as a dove of peace, bearing any number of olive-leaves with him. But Mr. Kelly would have none of them.

‘I blame myself greatly,’ he said, ‘for having ever endured for a moment the rude buffoonery of your office.’

‘Not my office, if you please,’ amended Mr. Butterby.

‘You found the capital to start it.’

‘Certainly not.’

‘Certainly yes ; but not out of your own money,’ retorted Barney.

‘Your words are actionable, sir.’

‘Commence an action, then.’

But Mr. Butterby did not commence an action. He thought over matters, and decided for the future to deprive Burleigh Street of the pleasure of his society.

‘I am not going to come here for a long time,’ he declared.

‘All right,’ retorted Mr. Laplash. ‘I dare say I can manage my own affairs for myself.’

‘Kelly said Lance was a very courtier in comparison to you.’

‘Glad Lance’s manners pleased His Highness.’

‘Before I go I’ll give you a bit of advice. Mind what you’re about with Mrs. Lacere. If she goes you’ll never get such another horse in the Burleigh Street stable.’

‘Much obliged ; only she’ll not go.’

‘Oh ! she won’t, won’t she ?’

‘No,’ retorted Mr. Laplash, ‘and it is no business of yours why.’





CHAPTER XI.

EVIL DAYS.

IN common with other authors, more or less known than herself, Glen had, after Mr. Felton's death, suffered a curtailment in her prices, which, after a time, began to affect her seriously.

At first Mr. Laplash exhibited a considerable amount of diplomacy in his management.

When he came to look into affairs he found them, so he told her, in such a confounded mess he could not afford to give her within two hundred pounds of the amount named by his late partner.

She submitted to that reduction, so losing her first and best chance of resistance.

Then her husband was taken ill, and Mr.

Laplash said, 'she had been so long out of the market, her next book would take ever so much more advertising, and he really could not afford to give her above five hundred pounds.'

Glen said nothing, but she thought a great deal.

Mr. Lacere had been very ill, consequently about the same time two facts began to dawn upon her mind—namely, that the 'big business' had gone, and that her own large income was going.

The great house down in the provinces, after biding its time, decided on sending one of its junior partners round the world to enlarge his mind. Concurrently with that enlargement all shipping orders ceased, and thenceforward not one single cheque worth having came to Mr. Logan-Lacere.

Yet the large firm might have left him the small home and continental fish, to catch which he had advertised so long, angled so sedulously, and spent so much time and money. But no—Europe out of England, and England out of London, vanished simultaneously.

London was still left, but London alone could not possibly pay ; further, at this crisis, Mr. Lacere's cousin's excellent business collapsed. Of course, Mr. Lacere was once again involved in the failure of his relation, and after that the downfall of Mordaunt Logan-Lacere became a mere question of time.

It took about as many months to compass his destruction as it has taken minutes to exhibit the tactics of the great firm. There was the usual long-drawn-out torture, then the fierce fight, the mad attempt to stave off the inevitable.

After that, ruin, utter and complete, without a penny wherewith to commence a fresh fight ; while everyone said, ' Oh ! Mrs. Lacere, able as you are to make a large income, you'll be so *much* better without business of any kind.'

Then, as if failure and bankruptcy meant a sort of jubilee, invitations poured in, and the Laceres, had they been made of the stuff out of which genteel paupers are moulded, might have lodged and boarded for a year free of cost. The world—their social world—was good to them beyond telling ; the world—his busi-

ness world—was cruel to Mr. Logan-Lacere as Mr. Laplash to Glen.

‘Your wife’s income must pay your debts,’ said his creditors.

‘You are not selling as you did. People are beginning to say you’ll have to mind what you’re about,’ said Mr. Laplash; so if ever there was a literary woman who paced the London pavements in a fine frenzy of despair, that woman was Glenarva Logan-Lacere.

Further, Mr. Laplash’s manners, never, even in Glen’s most prosperous days, remarkable for respect or appreciation, now dropped into such easy familiarity, that Lance’s ‘crack author’ felt at times almost beside herself with indignation. It would only have made matters worse to show she was offended; further, Glen knew perfectly well her first serious quarrel with Mr. Laplash would be their last. Till she should be prepared to leave him as a publisher, she bit back the words that often sprang to her lips, answering only by silence or some cutting retort, the full meaning of which Mr. Laplash apparently did not wish to comprehend.

Sitting with his hat on (in which Mrs.

Lacere once asked him if he slept), this light among modern publishers would greet her with—‘How’s Mordaunt? Got any work yet?’ or, ‘I can’t speak to you to-day. Look in to-morrow;’ or, ‘You’re a nice sort of young woman. Where’s the rest of that manuscript?’ or, ‘I had your note, but it’s of no use asking me for any money—we ain’t got none here;’ or, ‘That last reprint of yours was a bad business for me; I wish it had been at the —— before I ever was such a fool as to take it;’ and all the time while he was insulting her position, and depreciating her work, and grinding her down to the last penny, he was, as she found out afterwards, making a good income from her books, and finding her, as Mr. Butterby truly said, ‘the best steed in his stable.’

Which, from a literary point of view, was perhaps not saying much, for the Laplash stable was fast growing to be synonymous with a knacker’s yard. To be quite fair, however, there was this much in Mr. Laplash’s favour—he had never liked Mrs. Lacere or her books. So far as he possessed any literary taste whatever, it inclined to the ‘penny

dreadful ' style of novel. He believed she had been totally overpaid in his partner's lifetime, and he felt it a true labour of love to recoup himself a portion of what she had over-received from the firm. Further, he did not know how he hurt her. Glen came of a race that could bear any amount of pain and make no sign, and she was not going to show him how his words cut into her heart, and the lash of his tongue touched the most sensitive part of her nature.

Burdened with the burdens of old, crushed to the earth with new burdens such as even a man might have found hard to carry, still Glenarva's soul would have rejoiced in her labour had one single appreciative word rewarded her endeavours.

Beyond anything, she was an honest worker. Not for the morning's meal or the day's bread could she have turned out a pot-boiler. Circumstances might be against her, the conditions of her life unfavourable for producing good copy, but the books she sent Mr. Laplash were the best she had ever written. They were poorly paid; they were accepted with apparent reluctance; yet had any man

offered her ten thousand pounds for her manuscript, she could have given him nothing better then.

In return, Mr. Laplash flouted and disparaged her novels, sent barely half a dozen to the reviewers, advertised them at last scarce at all.

‘He’s killing your books,’ said one who was behind the scenes.

Mr. Laplash was doing worse. He was killing her powers. Taking such genius as she possessed by the throat, he had simply commenced to strangle it, and ere long would have done so, but that there came a time when matters between him and Glen arrived at a climax.

She had gone to Burleigh Street to ask for money—no uncommon petition, unhappily. On the occasion in question it was needed to avert impending legal proceedings, and Mrs. Lacere was silly enough to tell Mr. Laplash the fact. In total silence Mr. Laplash heard all she had to say ; then he answered that if she would come to his office on the next day at the same hour, he should be able to tell her what he could do.

When the next day came, Glen, on calling, found Mr. Laplash absent. But he had left a note, which she tore open eagerly, expecting to find the desired cheque enclosed.

Instead of this, she drew out a large sheet of ruled paper, on which appeared something which purported to be a true account of the pecuniary result of her last book. In her long literary experience she had never received such a document before, but she knew enough of business to understand the figures which met her eyes. So much for printing so many copies—a very great number of copies—so much for paper, binding, advertising—the total cost amounting on the one side to a large sum.

On the other, so many copies sold to the trade at —— per dozen, thirteen as twelve ; so much to author ; reviewers, five copies ; *left in stock, five hundred copies*—the result being that Mr. Laplash represented he was a loser to the extent of twenty-four pounds nine and tenpence halfpenny over the transaction.

As she folded up this extraordinary document, Glen noticed a half-sheet of note-paper,

which had dropped from the envelope to the floor.

Feeling nothing more could amaze her, she lifted it, and read :

‘ You will see from the enclosed that *you are no such catch after all.*’

There and then the fortunate author would like to have done battle with Mr. Laplash, but she knew enough of his habits to be aware he had gone away to avoid her, and did not mean to return to Burleigh Street that day.

‘ Tell Mr. Laplash,’ she said to the clerk, pausing for a moment in the outer office, ‘ that I shall come here to-morrow at three o’clock, and *wait till I see him.* Do not forget, if you please, to deliver my message.’

The young man was very earnest in his assurances that he would certainly do so.

Glen thought that as he spoke he was struggling to suppress a smile, but if he had laughed in her face she would not have cared.

She knew he had, under the direction of his

chief, prepared that precious balance-sheet, and was perfectly aware Mr. Laplash did not want to see her ; and the tone of her voice was so full of this conviction, that, after he had given his principal Mrs. Lacere's message, he added on his own account the information :

‘ You may as well see her, for she means to have the matter out.’

Accordingly, when next day Glen, true to her appointment, arrived, she was, with that charming absence of undue ceremony which prevailed at Burleigh Street, told, ‘ You’ll find him inside.’

‘ Inside ’ she found ‘ him ’ seated, with his hat on, at the familiar table, apparently engrossed in writing a letter. There had been a time when she would have taken a chair without being invited to do so ; but now she stood till she should compel his attention.

‘ Sit down, can’t you ? ’ he said at last, still busy with his writing.

Glen sat down, and waited, watching Mr. Laplash, and losing herself in a perfect maze of speculation, till, suddenly throwing down

his pen, and blotting off the sheet, and thrusting the letter into an envelope, he turned his head half round and said :

‘ Now, what is it ? ’

‘ I will wait till you are quite at leisure,’ she suggested. .

‘ I’m as much at leisure now as I’m ever likely to be,’ he answered. ‘ You got my note yesterday ? ’

‘ Yes; that is what I have come to talk about.’

‘ You see just how the thing stands. I thought it better to show you the figures. What can’t speak can’t lie, you know.’

‘ I am not so sure of that,’ she replied.

‘ Well, you can examine my books if you like. I can’t say fairer than that, can I ? ’

‘ I don’t want to examine your books,’ said Glen. ‘ I may be very foolish, but I am not so foolish as to fail to know books can be kept to show anything. However, we need not go into that question. What I do wish to know is this. You say you have lost money by my last novel. How does it happen ? ’

‘ Why, you don’t sell.’

‘ Why don’t I sell ? ’

‘Because, in the first place, you’re not what you were.’

‘My books are no worse, if that is what you mean ; and in the second——?’

‘People have got sick of that sort of thing. They want something pleasant and genial. None of that cynicism and realism you’re so fond of. I really think I might do a little good with a book of yours if you would turn your attention to the subjects novel-readers care about.’

‘What do they care about?’

‘Now, that just shows your deficiency. As an author, you ought to know. Love and beauty and children, and dress and jewels, and parties and pleasure, and everything coming right at the end, is the sort of novel there’s a rush for at Mudie’s. You think what I say over, and bring me a genial book with a good plot and a sympathetic heroine, and I’ll see what I can do for you.’

Mr. Laplash paused, and Glen kept silence for a moment. Then she said :

‘And suppose I brought you a genial book with a good plot and a sympathetic heroine—not that at present I exactly understand what

a sympathetic heroine is—how much could you offer me for such a triumph of art ?’

‘Come, don’t sneer,’ cried Mr. Laplash ; ‘that’s an awful fault of yours. What could I offer you ? Well, you see how matters are. But I would try to give you half of what you had for your last.’

‘And may I ask how you expect me to live ?’

‘Oh, that’s your affair, not mine. You’ll never live out of three-volume novels, that’s very clear. You’ll have to run your stories through the country newspapers ; that’s what they all do now—Collins, and Braddon, and the rest. And why not you ? I’ve no objection. Then there are the magazines ; so long as I’ve the book in time to publish three months before it finishes in serial form, you may do what you like with it. I’ll not stand in your way.’ With which generous declaration Mr. Laplash took another sheet of paper, and would have commenced writing again, but that Glen stopped him.

‘One moment, please,’ she said ; ‘I will not detain you long. Do you recollect when I sold you the book, over which you say you

have lost so much, I asked you to try and get me an engagement to run a serial through one of the magazines? There are at least three editors to whom you would have had but to speak to ensure its acceptance.'

'Now you mention it, I do remember your saying something of the kind,' answered Mr. Laplash, wisely ignoring the last part of Glen's sentence.

'And when I spoke to you again, and reminded you of your promise—for you did promise—you said you had forgotten.'

'So I had—I have my own affairs to occupy my attention.'

'And the next thing I saw,' proceeded Glen, 'was that Lady. Hilda Hicks and Miss Yarlow, and the author you have recently discovered "greater than Thackeray," "more genial than Dickens," were announced as appearing in each of the three magazines.'

'And the same chance was open to you; it you have no push, don't blame me.'

'Mr. Laplash, I had not the same chance, and you know it. You can put just what you please into those magazines; as I heard a person say the other day, you are "hand-and-

glove " with the proprietors. And as for the other magazines, you are perfectly well aware how I am situated, and how impossible it is for me, with illness in my home, either to wait for engagements or to be running about from office to office.'

'Well, that's no fault of mine. You had your chance. Why didn't you save your money when we were paying you those enormous sums? If you'd been wise you might have now capitalized enough to live on the interest for life.'

'If I had been wise,' retorted Glen, 'I should never have sold a book to your firm after "Heron's Nest."'

'That's too good,' exclaimed Mr. Laplash.

'Offers came to me then,' she went on, 'but I would not take advantage of them. I thought Mr. Felton had acted generously by me, and that I would act fairly by him. The same feeling kept me with you; but it was a mistake. You have always been my enemy. God alone knows why, for I do not. But we will end the mistake now——'

'What's the use of all this talk?' he interrupted.

‘I have not troubled you with much talk during the eleven years I have known this office, and I shall never trouble you with any talk again.’

‘What are you going to do, then?’ he asked.

‘See if in London there is not a publisher who believes in me,’ she answered boldly.

‘I wish you luck,’ he said. ‘Now, look here. You have told me a lot of things to-day; in reply, I have only one remark to make to you. Novel-writing’s not a gold mine, and, if it were, you’re not the woman to dig out the gold. I can see very plainly what the result of your career will be. You’ll have to apply to the Royal Literary Fund, and then you’ll see whether you like their terms better than mine.’

‘There is another alternative,’ said Glen.

‘What’s that?’

‘The parish,’ she answered, ‘the mercies of which I should prefer to working any longer for you.’

‘Ah! you’re angry now,’ he said, as she rose; ‘you’ll be glad enough to come back in a day or two.’

‘Shall I ? Good-evening, Mr. Laplash.’

By this time he had fairly got the sheet of paper before him, and was writing away like a maniac.

She looked around the remembered office, and a thousand old associations laid their tender, softening hands upon her.

‘I am going, Mr. Laplash ; good-evening,’ she repeated—even after what had passed she could not bear to part in malice.

He did not speak in reply ; he did not look at the woman who had worked for his firm so hard, and out of whom he had made so much money ; but he half lifted his head, and nodded farewell over his shoulder.

She stopped for a moment to speak to the clerk as she passed his desk, then, drawing down her veil, she went out into the gathering night, shaking the dust of Burleigh Street off her feet for ever.

Of the months that followed, Glenarva never cared to speak. Safely it may be said, no woman who had climbed to the height where she once stood ever knew a similar experience.

They were months unilluminated by success, in which, had she never written a line, she

might have fared better. But seven years since she stood almost at the top of the literary tree, and for all the good that fame had done her, she had better have endured failure than scored success. She walked publishing London through—she toiled up flights and flights of stairs—she saw editors—she talked to the principals of great houses—and yet, but for the kindness of two men she had known in more prosperous days, during the course of those months her earnings would have been literally *nil*.

‘I don’t remember your name,’ said one editor to her. ‘What have you done?’

“‘Ashtree Manor,” “Due East,” “Heron’s Nest,”’ answered Glen glibly enough, looking at her interlocutor by the light of his shaded lamp.

‘*I never heard of one of them,*’ he said.

It was then the iron entered into Glenarva’s soul. Rip Van Winkle himself was not so strange after twenty years’ absence to the inhabitants of his village, as Glen to the new literary world of London. The children’s children had, at least, heard of him; little more than a lustre, during most of which

she was hard at work, sufficed to wipe all memory even of her name off public remembrance.

Given sickness in her home ; poverty ; persons dependent on her who had never even thought of trying to be useful, and an utter impossibility of procuring work—and how, it may be asked, did this once successful author manage to live ?

Well, during that awful time she found friends, tradespeople, servants, and landlord different from the stereotyped examples depicted in books. Shoulder to shoulder, friends stood by her ; tradesmen had faith, her servants love, the landlord patience. It was only Glen herself who sometimes failed, who thought, ‘It is impossible I can ever fight through this ;’ and yet she did.

What Mr. Felton said about her having no ‘go’ was utterly true. Mr. Laplash’s remark concerning her want of ‘push’ could not on the score of truth be quarrelled with ; but she had one quality for which few gave her credit—dogged perseverance.

It was this which had carried her through the earlier part of her career ; it was this

which enabled her day after day to support fresh disappointment and cruel rebuff.

For even where her name was known she met merely with tolerance or scant civility. The days when she could sit down on a flight of stairs and cry were gone and past ; but a worse bitterness than that which occasioned those tears now rankled in her heart.

‘What have I done, or left undone,’ she one day asked her husband, ‘to be treated as the worst of impostors?’

‘The evil comes from Burleigh Street,’ he answered. ‘But have patience, dear; the right must win in the end.’

‘I do not know,’ she said sadly; ‘but I feel as if I had lost my position for ever.’

That was precisely what Mr. Laplash trusted she would feel; knowing how she was situated, he hoped to starve her out. In his calculation, however, he made one great mistake. She would have preferred to starve to returning to the Burleigh Street servitude. More, she would have done menial work, or begged for those dependent on her, sooner than again take service under the Laplash banner.

‘What’s become of Mrs. Lacere?’ inquired

Mr. Kelly one evening, meeting Lady Hilda at a party. He saw she was heading the Burleigh Street list, and felt sure she must have some knowledge of the Laplash tactics.

‘Mrs. Lacere!’ replied Lady Hilda. ‘Oh! don’t you know? She’s quite used up. Can’t write at all; her last books were awful failures. Didn’t sell at all.’

‘Indeed!’ said Barney, interested.

‘Yes, and she was dreadfully insolent to Mr. Laplash, who acted most kindly to her. I couldn’t have believed any woman could have been so ungrateful.’

‘And to *such* a benefactor!’ observed Barney.

‘Yes, he kept her on even at a loss to himself; but at last she made herself so disagreeable he was obliged to get rid of her, and she and her husband now are in absolute want. Serve her right. I went over to see her—just to find out how things were, you know, and you wouldn’t believe the impertinence with which she treated me. Said I was an emissary from the Laplash camp—come to spy out the land, and all that sort of thing.’

‘And perhaps she was right, Lady Hilda,’

hinted Barney ; whereupon her ladyship made some remarks about Ireland and the Irish that subsequently did her no good.

‘ Now,’ thought Mr. Kelly, ‘ I’ll just find out what the meaning of all this is ; and if, as I shrewdly suspect, our friend has been trying to damn the woman, we’ll see whether two people can’t play at a game.’

He did not care for Mrs. Lacere, but, hating Mr. Laplash, he determined to wound him through her ; and therefore, within a fortnight Burleigh Street and the world which had forgotten Glen were utterly astonished with a long article in *The Dragon* concerning her books.

‘ Why, here’s the author I’ve been wanting,’ cried an editor. ‘ Where on earth has my memory been !’

Before the day was out, he had called on Mrs. Lacere and arranged with her for a serial.

‘ You’ll do your best for me ?’ he said, as they shook hands at parting.

‘ I’ll do the best I ever did for anyone in my life,’ she answered, and she was faithful to her word.

‘They are going to pay me in twelve equal instalments,’ Glen said to her husband, whom she astonished with her news. ‘So we can now take a little place out of town.’

That had for some time past been the dream of husband and wife. So far as he was concerned, he knew that in the busy haunts of men his place had long been filled up, and that the only chance of future work and usefulness lay down in the country; while for Glen, all she wanted was to get away from London for ever, to rest heart and brain and body in some remote region where she had not suffered and spent her strength for nought.

But to do this till the blessed certainty of regular work was ensured would have been utter madness. Even then she felt any residence they took could only be regarded as temporary.

‘What we had better do, dear,’ she said—for, alas! during that time of serious illness it had become necessary for her to take the helm—‘is to look out a house for the winter in some neighbourhood not too far from London you think you would like. Then

when the spring comes we can perhaps find a place to suit us for a permanency.'

So said, so done. A small house was found and taken; just so many things were unpacked as they absolutely wanted; Mr. Lacere set himself to get well; Glen bought some manuscript paper, and turned fiercely to work.

She had never been so happy before, never—not in her youngest days—not when hope reigned triumphant—not when fruition succeeded to hope. What though they were poor beyond relief? She had all her husband needed. What though the day's work seemed never ended? It was a work of love, into which Glenarva put her whole strength and soul and spirit. The hunger of her nature was at last satisfied. She had her husband to herself; she was all in all to him, in theory and in fact. Through devious and thorny paths God Almighty was leading her to the peace He alone can give, and at the same time teaching her the worth and truth of the great heart, the patience of which her fitful nature must so often have tried.

It was to outward appearance but a mean,

poor house in which the Laceres lived, yet to Glenarva it seemed a palace.

With the outer door closed between themselves and the world and its troubles, husband and wife talked as they had never talked before during all their married life. Through her own suffering she began to understand the story of his ; by reason of the strong compression she put on her feelings she at last comprehended the apparent reticence of a nature far nobler and grander than her own.

‘Overweighted ! undervalued ! misunderstood ! O God,’ she used to think, ‘what might my husband not have done with different surroundings !’ and she would stand under the starlight with tears streaming down her cheeks, wrung from the divinest compassion a woman’s heart can know.

For at last she felt fully aware everything in her books the world thought great and true and useful was due to the husband who had never been able to make his mark. Without him she could have done nothing—nothing—and in return she had not half loved him as she ought.

There came a night when, casting herself

on her knees, she told him something of what was in her mind.

‘Why, my darling!’ he said, in amazement, ‘my dearest Glen, you are the only blessing I ever knew.’

‘Do you mean that? Have I been a blessing?’

So then he told her; he recited his life; he touched on what he had done for others, and how he had been repaid.

‘I think I had it in me to achieve something once,’ he finished; ‘but situated as I was, how could I do much? and besides——’

‘Besides what, love?’ she asked, twining her arms round him.

‘I cannot lament any road which led me to you. Oh, Glen, how could I think any path stony, which in the end gave me such love as yours! You were right and I was wrong,’ he added, after a moment; ‘but what I did was all, as I thought, for the best. Now those for whom I sacrificed my best years leave me for you. They are right. My day to help anyone is over.’

It was the first cry of pain, loneliness and despair she had ever heard him utter—he,

whose life had been spent for others—and she could not answer him for tears.

With her arms clasped round his neck—with her head buried in his bosom—she wept as she had not done since she lost her father.

Still, even in sorrow there is infinite happiness, and all through that dreary winter Glenarva was most happy. Save for her husband's health, she did not know a care, except one which would occasionally obtrude :

‘ Suppose I died !’

This idea she kept for a long time to herself ; but at last, when one day she was totally prostrate, she could not (womanlike) restrain its expression.

‘ Don't go out to meet trouble half-way,’ said her husband. ‘ Have not means hitherto been given to us, and health to you ?’

So she wrote on steadily, with a vigour, a determination, and a happy spirit of cheerfulness that it may be her labours had hitherto lacked. Throwing sentiment behind her, together with Mr. Laplash's advice, she went on producing chapter after chapter of a book which charmed the public, and delighted those for whom she worked. At first, though

greatly marvelling at the chapters she turned out, they only said they were satisfied; but that expression of opinion, when accompanied with regular cash payments, seemed sufficient praise to a woman who had lived for years in the depressing atmosphere of eternal grumbling. All Mr. Laplash had found fault with was now accounted a virtue.

Reviewers soon discerned that Mrs. Lacere did not profess to write for children and girls, but for men and women. Each month *The Dragon* inserted a long notice of her serial, a marked copy being duly and truly sent to Burleigh Street, as though it were supposed Mr. Laplash, who was travelling fast the road that leads to Ruin, still published her works; but of all this Glen knew nothing.

At last she personally was out of all worlds, save that bounded by her small domestic horizon. Except for the daily papers, she knew nothing of how society was going on. The springing grass, the snowdrops peeping above the ground, the sobbing cry and rustling stir of the early spring-time, were more to her than the latest literary review or the 'biggest' book on the New Year's lists.

She was happy—oh, how happy! God and herself only knew. If she could but become once more re-established in popular favour—and she thought she could—what a future lay before her—of fame, and peace, and love!

She valued fame merely for the sake of the only man, besides her father, she had ever cared for; she wished for money for nothing save to purchase him the poor luxuries he never even thought of desiring. For years after, Glen could not look at the shop-windows save with a sickening heart. She had wished for this, that, and the other to take to him; when her means sufficed she turned in and bought some article, trifling enough in value, yet such as wrung her very soul to see in the days to come. Self had then no existence for the once somewhat exacting woman. Save as regards work, she had forgotten the meaning of the word.

Yes, she was happy at last, most happy—spite of the mean house, and the sordid surroundings, and the daily labour for such little pay. Shall I leave her thus? No; it would be a most unfinished picture. Let us go on to the end with Glenarva Lacere.

There came a day when, in the pursuit of something connected with her work, walking across the park, she met Mr. Kelly. Ever their acquaintance had been of the slightest—so slight, indeed, that feeling at once conscious of her own changed position, and the utter absence of style and fashion in her dress, she would have passed him by had Barney elected to be so treated.

‘Why, Mrs. Lacere,’ he said, ‘what an age it is since I have seen you!’ and then without more to do he plunged head first into the Laplash question. Glen had not much to say likely to add to his knowledge; nevertheless, it sufficed.

‘I suppose you have the ball at your foot again?’

‘I am doing my best,’ she answered humbly.

‘And that best is very good,’ he said. ‘Indeed, I did not think you had it in you.’

She turned aside, and looked over the railings, for she could not answer him.

‘You were very wise,’ he went on, ‘to leave Laplash. Now I know you will make your way.’

‘I never could have made it to any purpose in Burleigh Street,’ she laughed.

‘No ; we all made a mistake in leaving Mr. Vassett,’ he remarked ; and then they walked on together a little way, talking as they went.

Barney made many particular inquiries concerning Mr. Lacere, who, Glen said, was gaining strength rapidly. ‘He must not try to live in town, though,’ she added. ‘He has found a place we think of taking—such a tiny dot of a house in the middle of a small farm. He is delighted at the idea of settling down there.’ And then she went on to speak of the garden and the fruit trees, and what her husband proposed to do, and the stock he meant to keep ; and Barney asked if some day in the summer he might run down and call—‘For I feel quite proud of you as a countrywoman,’ he said, which pride must have been of remarkably recent date. But Glen did not think of that—indeed, it is never prudent to analyze compliments or motives too closely.

‘Is there anything I can do for you ?’ he asked at parting.

‘You have done a great deal for me,’ she

replied. 'I was always very fond of being praised ; and the worst of an author's life is, one so seldom hears the applause.'

'Though one does the hissing,' said Barney.

It was a very proud, happy woman who returned home that day to tell her husband all the pleasant things which had happened to her in town ; and the evening's post brought a letter still more delightful than Mr. Kelly's encouraging words. It came from her then editor, who stated he thought it but right to tell her the mark her serial was making. 'There were those,' he went on, 'who said, "Mrs. Lacere is played out," "Her day is over." "Wait," I answered ; "you don't know her staying-powers;" and now they see I was right. I have not the slightest hesitation in saying you will do better work than you have ever turned out yet. You have made a gallant fight. Keep up your spirits a little longer. Money must follow fame.'

Oh, with what a light heart Glen rose the next morning to her work ! She wrote nearly the whole day, only breaking off occasionally to listen to her husband's remarks about the new residence.

‘If the agreement is signed to-morrow, can we move in a week?’ he asked. ‘I long to be there.’

‘To-morrow, if you like,’ she laughed, for she had never known him so eager and anxious about anything before.

Then came the twilight, and the evening closed in and night drew on; and Glen, saying ‘There is a passage in this book I want to read you,’ sat down beside the table, and turned over the pages in order to find what she wanted.

As she was doing so she heard a slight noise, and looking up, in one moment started to her feet. ‘You are not well!’ she cried. O Lord! what was this? She knew—she knew! Once again FAME had crossed the threshold hand-in-hand with DEATH!

Where had the hopes and the dreams, so bright and fair but a few minutes previously, departed? They were gone! withered and faded like gathered flowers—the glory of the morning light was shrouded in darkness. She was alone—alone—for evermore. Alone with her dead and God.



CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

THIRTY months had come and gone since that night when Glenarva Lacere was left to make what she could of life alone. How those thirty months were passed it would have been impossible for her to tell, for she did not know herself. When we have fought with some great temptation, battled for our lives against death and disease, struggled to prevent an almost overwhelming grief, killing our reason or destroying our soul—who can analyze that process by which deliverance was compassed and salvation wrought?

All Mrs. Lacere ever knew was that the time had somehow passed—that she had

worked hard, that she had suffered horribly, and that she thanked God !

One August day in the year which came thirty months after that trouble which changed Glenarva and her life, Ned Beattie crossed Holborn in order to call on his old friend.

But recently arrived in England, his first care had been to ascertain her address and to write a few words of sympathy which touched Glen to her very soul. He had heard of her loss, he said, just on the eve of leaving San Francisco for Australia; he wanted to see her—he would go into Hampshire, where she was living, any day she liked to name.

In reply, she told him she was in London for a short time; and this was how it chanced he was crossing Holborn on his way to Queen Square. How should he find her, after the long, long years—after her struggle, her success, her trouble? Would the Glen he had known be dead? How would she be dressed? how would she look? what would she say? how would she greet him? Since the morning when he lay on the beach at Ballyshane, with his head resting on her lap, he had been half over the world—made a large fortune; and

she—she—— He walked twice round the Square before he could make up his mind to knock at the door of the house where she was lodging ; the tones of his own voice sounded strange to him as he inquired for Mrs. Lacere. A minute after, he was upstairs and standing alone in a large drawing-room. Then, though he could not see her quite distinctly, he knew Glen had entered the apartment, that her hand lay clasped in his, that she was welcoming him back with tears ; and the meeting, after long separation, which is sometimes so cruel and terrible, was over.

Now the mist had passed from before his eyes, and he could see her clearly, he did not think her so much changed. She was more like the Glen of his earlier remembrance than she had seemed when last they met. Ere a quarter of an hour was gone he felt as though he had never been away at all—as if they had but resumed the broken conversation of a previous day.

So, after he had crossed the actual mountains and oceans of earth, and she scaled heights of labour and passed through seas of trouble, they resumed the friendly intimacy of

their youth, and spoke together freely on all subjects save one.

He tried to get her to speak of her husband, and failed.

As day succeeded to day, and he saw her constantly, she told him all about her home, her life, her books, her interests, her means, her friends, but so far as her sorrow was concerned, she might never have been wife or widow for all the mention she made of it.

‘I wish she would talk about him,’ thought Ned—but wishing was vain; and at the end of a month, during the course of which no day had passed without his seeing her, this old friend knew just as little of what was in her mind as the hour they first met. She was about returning home.

‘And you must come and see my cottage,’ she said. ‘It is not really very far from London, you know.’

‘Yes; you may be very sure I shall come,’ he answered; and so they parted. He did not immediately avail himself of her invitation, but at last wrote to say he meant to run down on the following Wednesday, and take the express back to London in the evening

It was late on Thursday when another letter arrived from Ned :

‘I hope he is not writing to put off his visit,’ thought Glen ; but as she read the first few lines the paper dropped from her hands, and with an exclamation of dismay she rose and paced the room. Then she picked up the letter again, and read it to the end.

‘He imagined I should not have time to answer it before he came,’ she said, going to her writing-table.

‘DEAR, FOOLISH NED,’ she began,

‘You know you do not want to marry me, and it is very certain I am not going to marry you or anyone else. I write at once, so that our holiday may not be spoiled by any fancied necessity on your part to mar your own life by trying to mend mine. My dear, kind, faithful, generous Ned, I am sorry you have forced me to say this.

‘Ever your attached old friend,

‘GLEN.’

She went over to the station to meet him the next day, and they walked through the woods and winding field-paths to her home.

It was a fair, fair home—built on a slight eminence above the Wey, surrounded on three sides by dark, solemn pines ; not the home she had once thought to inhabit with another, but a quiet, dreamy place where her bruised heart had found rest, and her tossed spirit peace. There had been a time when she could not bear to look on the face of nature, when the sunshine wrung her soul, and the budding leaves, and the springing grass, and the song of birds, and the ripple of water seemed all so many piercing swords ; but that time was past, and her eyes now reflected the calm light of a better and happier world.

In her pleasant house the long French windows opened on to a terrace, beneath which turf, green and velvety, sloped gently to the river's brink. Will Ned Beattie, so long as he lives, ever forget that soft grass, that wealth of flowers, the white curtains swaying in the light breeze, the late roses twining round the pillars of the veranda, the clematis, the myrtles, and the fuchsias she had forced herself to plant and tend at a time when she might have watered them with her tears ?

That time was gone, and Glen—his Glen

also—Ned felt, as he stood looking upon her ; but he loved this Glen better, who had no love to give him in return.

They rowed up the stream, coming back in time for early dinner ; and then she showed him her little farm-yard, and, side by side, they passed the limits of her small domain.

After that they sat on the grass close by the water, and talked of the old days departed, till Glen could almost feel the air of the hills fanning her forehead and see the waves breaking on the shore. It was a sad, tender afternoon for them both, though no cloud flecked the azure of the sky, and the September sun touched the shafts of the pines with golden light.

‘Come in—and have some tea, Ned,’ she said at last.

‘Not yet,’ he answered. ‘Glen, before I go I must speak to you. I got your note.’

‘Yes.’

‘And I can’t live without you any longer. I don’t know how I have lived so long, for I can remember no day since my boyhood in which I have not loved you.’

She looked at him with pitying tenderness as she answered steadily :

‘ There was but one man in the world for me, and I married him.’

‘ But, Glen, you are surely not going to live your life here, and alone ? Why not be happy yourself, and make me so ?’

‘ I could not make you happy, Ned ; and for myself, I am content—utterly. If I could, I would not bring my dead back to life.’

‘ Oh ! Glen—my Glen !’

She laid her hand upon his softly.

‘ We cannot choose our lot,’ she said, ‘ and we are never happy till we feel it is appointed for us. Mine has been *most* happy.’

‘ And yet,’ he said, with sudden bitterness, ‘ I remember you telling me once you were *most* unhappy. Do you think there is a word you ever spoke I forgot ?’

‘ I *was* unhappy,’ she answered ; ‘ for I did not understand my husband then, or for many an after year. I do not know, indeed, that I ever did till I saw him in sickness and poverty supported by a faith which never failed him—bright with a thankful cheerfulness that ad-

versity never destroyed. When I think of what a life his was—full of toil and trouble, disappointment and failure ! He had nothing, Ned—nothing the world accounts of value.’

‘ He had you ! ’ said Ned hoarsely.

‘ Yes, he had me,’ she agreed dreamily ; ‘ and I am thankful to remember that, though I must have tried that patient heart often, he loved me to the end.’

‘ You are talking nonsense, Glen ! ’ exclaimed Ned. ‘ What more could a man desire than such a wife as you ? Let me take you away from this lonely place and your morbid thoughts. I do not ask your love now. I only ask you to marry me. I will make you love me in time. I believe if your husband could speak to you now, he would bid you do what I want.’

‘ Let us end this,’ she said sadly. ‘ I cannot bear much more. It breaks my heart to talk of him or myself. I shall never marry again. Rank could not tempt, or wealth buy, or genius dazzle, or love win me. These are my last words on the subject.’

There was that in her tone and in her expression which killed all hope. It was

a dead and broken heart he had tried to warm into life. And Edward Beattie, after one long, steadfast look at the rippling river, rose and went with the woman he had loved so long and hopelessly into the house.

He dreamily accepted a cup of tea, and then, perhaps not sorry to find the minutes had crept on fast while they were talking, said he must be off; he had barely time to catch his train.

‘Take the boat across the river,’ she advised. ‘You will save half a mile and more.’

For a moment he stood on the lawn, in which were beds gorgeous with autumn flowers—stood bareheaded, holding her hand in his.

‘Good-bye—good-bye, dear Glen!’ he said; and then, stooping, he kissed her for the first time since, boy and girl, they parted on board the Morecambe steamer.

She knew they would never meet again—that the words he had spoken must needs separate them as friends, and she stood, as his hand left hers, watching his retreating figure,

and feeling almost as though she were looking on one dead.

Without glancing towards her, he pulled across the river, sprang out, and fastened the boat securely ; then strode along the field-path till he came to a stile, where his onward road dipped down among some trees.

There he stopped for a moment and looked back. Standing just as he had left her, he saw his brave, lonely Glen, who never for ever might be wife of his.

* * * * *

He will always think of her thus. When he reads notices of her books, he remembers not a girl in her first youth, among a group of boys, ready to share their maddest sports ; not a daughter seated beside a cultured gentleman, striving to read his thoughts ; not a struggling woman trying to trace a pencil-mark on the tablets of time ; not a wife whose very faults were loved by a husband who adored her ; but simply the Glen he knew and would have married—Glen in her trailing black garments, with the sluggish river to her left hand and

the darksome pine-woods to the right, with the sun westering behind the spot where she stood calmly waiting, with knowledge, but without fear, for the coming of that night which must preface the dawning of God's Eternal Day.

THE END.

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